

HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS*?
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SELDEN OSBORNE OF ILWU LOCAL 10

INTERVIEWEE: SELDEN OSBORNE

INTERVIEWERS: HOWARD KIMELDORF

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[00:00:00] **HOWARD:** Would you want to spell your name so that I can get it all right?

[00:00:03] **SELDEN:** Yes. S-E-L-D-E-N.

[00:00:06] **HOWARD:** S-E-L-D-E-N. Okay.

[00:00:07] **SELDEN:** O-S-B-O-R-N-E.

[00:00:08] **HOWARD:** Okay. Let's just make sure that we've got this all on tape before we go any further.
[click of audio]

The date of this interview is 9-11-81. Now I've explained very briefly the nature of my study. Why don't you briefly tell me again your involvement in the longshore industry, if you can. The year that you came onto the waterfront, and the nature of your activities there.

[00:00:32] **SELDEN:** Well, I came to work, here in San Francisco [California] just before the end of the war. I had been in the Army, and then got out of the Army to go back to sea. And after—and then, for reasons I'll go into if need be but perhaps not, I finally, in June 1945, I quit going to sea and I started working as a longshoreman. They were hiring many longshoremen then, because it was anticipated there would still be a long war in the Pacific, and the major [pause] major supplies were expected to be funneled out of San Francisco.

I had worked as a longshoreman, just as a casually, say, longshoreman, in Stockton [California], before this in 1936 and '7. I was in the strike in 1936 in Stockton, but only as an extra and the—I don't even want to go into this. It's a long story about it, and it came up in my fracas with [Harry] Bridges later, where it was said I—it was claimed that I wasn't really in Stockton, but I eventually proved that I was. But it's a very long story. I don't know whether you—that it's of any interest.

So I started here in 1945 as a what they called at that time a probationary longshoreman [pause]. After two years I became a union member. Following the 1946 strike, the union decided to take into membership all those probationary members that didn't have the slightest mark against them. They hadn't been a day late ever in paying their dues, and they didn't have any fracas with the rules. And so I became a member on that basis. I think that was in April 1947.

Another group was left over, who were not taken in at that time, who'd had some mark against them, and they were taken in I think in August of that same year. I don't know how much you want to say. I'll say that, the occasion—something kind of interesting happened—the occasion of taking them in in August of 1947—the occasion, the first time I guess—least the first time I was ever known to speak in the union, Germaine Bulcke was the president of Local 10 at that time, and he and Bridges were the great advocates of taking these men in, a big—most of whom probably were Black. The right-wingers were not much in favor of taking them in, probably for racial reasons, and quite possibly also because they foresaw a decline in work. They felt there wouldn't be work for everybody.

And Bridges and Bulcke—but Bridges as I had mentioned to you before is always able to speak in such a fashion that you can't really—you know where he stands but you can't exactly pin it down. Bulcke, not so [chuckle] clever. And so Bulcke said very flatly, what Bridges said also, was that, "We advocate taking these men in because the Taft-Hartley law," which has just recently been passed, "The Taft-Hartley law makes us take them in."

Well this attitude infuriated me. And so, I got up to speak against it. I was aimed particularly at Bulcke because he said it absolutely flatly. I said "That's a terrible attitude to take toward any men you're taking into the union. The real reason we take them in is because they have earned their right to be members of this union. They've stood through this last strike and they've worked for the last several years, most of them a longer time than I." And the interesting thing is, for which I certainly wish I had a videotape, was that after the meeting ended, Germaine Bulcke came down in the crowd to hunt me out and congratulate me on the speech that I'd made, which I intended to be a blow at him [laugh].

[00:05:01] **HOWARD:** [laugh] That's great.

Let me go back in time a little bit. Let me ask you these first questions I guess is what I'll do. Do you see any relationship between the political complexion of a union—in other words, whether it was characterized as

left-wing or right-wing—and the kinds of collective bargaining agreements it enters into, the degree of internal democracy it might have, or its stand on racial questions? Anything that having to do with the union. . .

[00:05:27] **SELDEN:** Oh, of course. Oh, of course

[00:05:28] **HOWARD:** Would you like to elaborate that?

[00:05:29] **SELDEN:** Well, surely [pause]. Let me say that, I made a study of the early days of the union. And I'll say to you—I guess I haven't ever said this to Bridges and such people—this is when I was going to Cal [University of California, Berkeley] and working with Lloyd Fisher. I started—I was never very serious about trying to get any Ph.D [doctor of philosophy] , and I as a graduate student I only took what I wanted to take. But I did start to write the union. And I wrote a first chapter which was eventually submitted as a seminar paper—not to Lloyd Fisher unfortunately, because he'd died by then—which I entitled “The Rise of the Bridges Government”. And it deals with the early years of the union. And particularly with the relationship of the Communist Party to the establishment of that Bridges government. And what I had hoped to study—and maybe you're going to—I hoped to study the influence of the Communist Party connection to the policies of the union in later years. [pause]

You know well I'm sure—everybody knows if they've studied at all—that what happened was in the '34 strike, after the '34 strike, was that it was settled by an arbitration. But what is particular—but I think it was very significant nevertheless—what the demands of the union were. And the demands—two particular demands that were very different I think from those of the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] elsewhere—this was of course ILA then. It was Local 3879 of the ILA. Bridges only rose to leadership during the strike and was elected president of the union after the strike, in September.

But, he and his group of supporters, which were fundamentally the communist unit on the waterfront—and many of them men I later knew fairly well, mostly in an unfriendly fashion, but not all of them—they had been very influential in the policies of the union. Bridges and Bjorne Halling—with whom I had some particular connection—and Henry Schmidt—were members of the executive board. Elected, I think when the executive board was first elected, which was probably in September 1933. And the communists in that time had been putting out a little paper, which I trust you've seen if you, called The Waterfront Worker. It was written in a—at least after a while—it was written in kind of a racy style that appealed to people and I think got a wide readership, so that they influenced the demands of the union.

The two demands that I mentioned that I think were most significant were one: that the union should have control of the distribution of work, control of the hiring hall. And the second—and the other demand was for a six hour day. Both of these demands—it seems amazing, when you look back on it—but both of these demands we accepted by the arbitration. And they became the foundation of the union, except that the six hour day never became effective except as a method of payment: that after six hours, overtime was paid.

When I worked in Stockton in 1936, one of the main jobs that we had was on the Luckenbach line and on that line the regular shift was 12 hours, at that time. Six hours straight time and six hours overtime and you go to lunch and you go to dinner. You start at eight o'clock in the morning and you finish and ten o'clock at night. And when I started in San Francisco in 1945, the regular shift was 10 hours. With this regular shift of 10 hours we were subject also to an extension, up to 12 hours, and I can't remember just how it worked out, but sometimes 13 when the ship was sailing. So that the six hour day was really, while it was a foundation of the union, it was only, rhetorical, except that we got the overtime pay.

[00:10:18] **HOWARD:** Was it ever intended to be anything other than that, or do you know?

[00:10:20] **SELDEN:** Yes. I think it was. I think that the communists and probably Bridges actually advocated—you see, this was in the Depression time, when there were not jobs and the idea partly was to spread the work. And there were time—now, I don't know the history of this fully—but there was a time, I believe, when the union or its so called, its rank-and-file members, which would have been certainly in that time lead by the communists, attempted to enforce the six hour day, and to have a new shift come on at the end of six hours. I think that one of the obstacles to this was that as far as from the union point of view, was that if you did that, the hours from three to five in the new shift were only paid at straight time. All work after five o'clock was always paid at overtime. But I think that they didn't want to give that benefit to the employers, and the employers did not want to break the shift that way.

I think that—see in the old days, as you probably know the work had been to work right straight through. They would work—they didn't have the day shift and night shift. They went to work, and when the ship came in they went to work and they went to work until the ship left. So sometimes these people worked two or three days. Of course, I don't know how they did it. Partly by consuming a great deal of alcohol, as well as coffee I guess.

[00:11:58] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:11:59] **SELDEN:** And sometimes I guess they found ways to go and sleep while their fellows worked. But I know that that's the way it was done. I don't think that I could have survived, and I'm amazed that some of the not-so-husky men that I saw that apparently did survive that kind of work shift.

[00:12:20] **HOWARD:** I know. It was incredible to read the hearings from the NLRB arbitration board in 1933. Men were working 24 hours at a time, 36 hours at a time.

[00:12:28] **SELDEN:** Yes. Yes.

[00:12:29] **HOWARD:** I just don't know how, physically, that was possible, unless as you say people were taking a little bit of a break, obviously.

[00:12:33] **SELDEN:** And you don't see quite how the employers could have seen that to be to their advantage. But they didn't want to give it up.

[00:12:39] **HOWARD:** No. I think it looks to me like it was a question of power. It wasn't so much that it was efficient to keep them in that long, but. . .

[00:12:46] **SELDEN:** But why didn't they change it themselves long before? You see, well I'm sure as you know, there was a—there had been a union back in World War I. And it was broken in a IWW [Industrial Workers of the World, also called Wobblies] led—or I think IWW led strike in 1919. Which apparently had such kind of demands as they were going to share in the profits of the employers and such things.

[00:13:07] **HOWARD:** Do you know anything about that union? It's one of the issues that I'm trying to deal with.

[00:13:10] **SELDEN:** No I don't really. And of course they'd all be dead now. I have occasionally talked a little bit to people who had been a longshoreman in that time, but not any that really were knowledgeable. So I don't.

But Bridges came, as you know I'm sure, in 1923. And in those days it was a company union. And his detractors—he sees himself as always an opponent of the company union. His detractors, who knew him in that time, don't see him as so at all. They—

[00:13:48] **HOWARD:** Could you explain that?

[00:13:51] **SELDEN:** Well, you know, I could do better. If at any particular points or if you ever want to try to talk to me in the future, I have quantities of material. Much of it in difficult form to find perhaps. But I have notes on a whole lot of these things. And I probably can find more directly my notes of what some individuals have said.

I know this—Bridges [clears throat]. Bridges was—see what he says about himself: he claims to have joined the IWW in New Orleans while he was still a seaman, I believe. And he claims to have been always a radical. I think he was always alienated from American official policies, American government, and American conservative labor movement. I think that was always true. But he doesn't seem to have taken any part in whatever minor efforts there were to oppose the company union in the years—in the 10 years before—in the ten years that he was there, before the attempt to organize in ILA in 1933. I—

[00:15:24] **HOWARD:** Was anyone else making an attempt at that time?

[00:15:27] **SELDEN:** Well, I knew one man, a man who had been at one time a very close friend of Bridges and supporter, although I think never a member of the Communist Party. A man who later, Bridges utterly denounced because the man's wife testified against Bridges in one of the deportation trials. I can tell you the details of that if you want to. But anyway, this man was an Englishman, a very slight man, and I couldn't really understand—I couldn't really feel how could that man survive all these years. But if I remember rightly, he followed a policy—maybe through all these years, through a big share of the years anyway—of refusing to pay any dues in the company union. And there was one dock, I think they called it the Japanese dock, where they could work not controlled by the company union.

Now I think that Bridges would claim—or disclaim, I'm not sure—but I think he'd claim that he would only pay dues when they absolutely made him, and that what would happen would be that they would work on a pier for a long time and not pay any dues, and then the representative of the union would come around and put the screws on them and make them pay. However toward the end of the time before the organization of the union—there's no question about this I think—that Bridges was a member of what was regarded as one of the star gangs at the American Hawaiian. And I imagine that this was what was particularly held against him by the people that were members of the company union, because it doesn't seem possible that he could've remained in that job and put up any real resistance at all to the union. The company union.

[00:17:15] **HOWARD:** One thing about the star gangs is it seems like a number of the people who were involved in the early stages of organizing the ILA 3233 came out of the "star" gangs.

[00:17:24] **SELDEN:** Is that right? I don't know.

[00:17:25] **HOWARD:** I thought Bulcke did, Bridges, and if I'm not mistake, Schmidt.

[00:17:31] **SELDEN:** Well, Schmidt has a different history. And I can tell you something about Schmidt's history. I once worked with him on the job. Schmidt had been a member of the Coast Labor Relations Committee during the war time. When I came here he was such. And then L.B. Thomas from San Pedro [California] —been president of the local in San Pedro, he's a man that I knew—I was in the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] council in Los Angeles when it was organized and I met LB Thomas and Don Cox in particular from the Longshoreman in San Pedro at that time. They became friends of mine after a fashion. Cox became a real friend. L.B. Thomas [pause] the kind of friend you don't need too much.

But L.B. Thomas ran for Schmidt's job and by a technicality that I can't remember exactly and not useful to go into I think, Schmidt I think was ruled off the ballot or something or other. And so he was out of a job and he went to work. I worked with him one day. Now he was at that time—well, this was just the time when the government was screening people—trying to screen people off the waterfront. And they did screen them out of the Army and Navy. Schmidt had been in a gang, and he was, the gang went to work there, and so he was rejected. So then he was work—he worked out of the gang for a little while. That's how I happened to work with him one day. It was—it was a pretty hard job of heading up drums I remember, and I was working with my friend Bart Abbott. You know, we thought it was reasonable that Schmidt was not in shape to do all this kind of work.

It was said about Schmidt that he was lazy. Many of the old timers accused him of being lazy. Now I didn't find him so and I want to tell you one story. About—I think you'd—about Schmidt. One time, I about the question of whether or not he was lazy. They said he spent all of his time talking about the union instead of doing his work. But I think it's not belied by this kind—possibly so, not belied by this story.

It used to be that extra men would come to work with us from Local 6 of the Warehousemen. And at one time a man came to work on the job that I was on, who said he had spent all his life working in the rice mills. And here they had closed down the rice mill that he was working in, and so he was out of a job. Well I knew already from what Schmidt had told me, that Schmidt came here from Minneapolis [Minnesota] somewhere working in working in these mills. And he worked for a long time in the rice mills. I asked this guy if he knew Henry Schmidt. He said, "Well you bet I do," he said. "I knew him to work with him and I knew him to be his boss." And even, to show that he wasn't too much probably prejudiced in his favor, he had some kind of a hassle with Schmidt, I think, over Schmidt's—either Schmidt's attentions to his wife or his attentions to Schmidt's wife or something or other. But then he said this about Schmidt, speaking of him when this guy had been his boss, he said, he said, "I never saw a faster sack sewer in my life." Well, sack sewing was an individual job and probably paid piecework. And that meant to me that Schmidt might very well have spent his time talking about the union and not doing what some other people thought was his share of the work, at one time, but when there was work with a challenge to it, he could work like hell. I have a son like that. [laugh] I can see it.

[00:21:17] **HOWARD:** [laugh] Yeah. You weren't around for the '34 strike, is that correct?

[00:21:23] **SELDEN:** I was a Young Socialist [Young People's Socialist League] in '34. In fact I was totally beyond my abilities. I was a Socialist Party organizer in Los Angeles during part of that strike and I didn't know which end was up.

I was up here and I just observed the waterfront a little bit. I saw the guns in placement over here by the bridge there at third and—just off of Third Street where you go across the bridge. And two friends of mine—close friends of mine—who were Young Socialists, went to work for the union. One of them was named [?Jean Simes?] , and she later married this Bjorne Halling.

[00:22:12] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:22:12] **SELDEN:** They're divorced now long ago. So I knew Bjorne, a little bit, and he was the original union representative in Washington. In fact I visited them once in Washington and I was going to sea, and my other friend, [?Denny Woodworth?] , both of them I say, just worked for the union. Oh, I'll tell you a story about that too.

[?Denny?] and I were Young Socialists—at Stanford [Stanford University] , we'd been roommates—and we were interested in combating the Communist Party by organizing a debate against them. We weren't really competent to debate them, but we wanted to debate them. At that time there was a headquarters of the

Unemployed Council, which was the communist dominated unemployment organization at what they called the Five Points. It's a little area of Redwood City [California] toward—

[00:23:09] **HOWARD:** I know exactly where that is.

[00:23:10] **SELDEN:** Okay. Well Denny and I went down to this Headquarters at Five Points to talk with a guy who's a communist—I don't know what his official title was—I think it was officially the Communist Party organizer in Redwood City. His name was [?John Delaney?] .

[00:23:29] **HOWARD:** Sounds real familiar.

[00:23:30] **SELDEN:** Yeah, it will be in a minute. We talked to him wanting to arrange this kind of a debate. There was a guy named Branch. James Branch was as they said the agitprop [political propaganda] director of District 13. He was later deported I think to Canada. He was Sam Darcy's [prominent communist] predecessor.

Anyway, we got acquainted with this [John] Schomaker trying to arrange this debate. It never came off. Then my friend [?Denny?] went to—the '34 strike happened after that—my friend [?Denny?] went to work for the union you know, helping it with office work. And a few names became prominent in the news. Of course Harry Bridges became prominent in the news, but another name also became prominent in the news, and that was Schomaker. I remember that Schomaker was one of the big spokesmen of the rank-and-file communists on the waterfront. When I met my friend [?Denny?] , he said, "My God, do you know Delaney is Schomaker." And I can show you a place, in The Western Worker I think, in which they are going to say that the demand of the longshoremen is a general strike, and the guy that voiced this demand was John Delaney. They made the mistake you see—

[00:25:16] **HOWARD:** Oh, I see—

[00:25:16] **SELDEN:** They meant to say John Schomaker and they put him under his party name.

[00:25:22] **HOWARD:** [laugh] That's strange.

[00:25:23] **SELDEN:** Well that's how I met John Delaney/Schomaker. Schomaker later, you know, after the—Schomaker was drafted, or went to war, maybe when they were—maybe he didn't go until they were—well they were advocates of the war of course by the time the United States went into it. He went into the SeaBees [Construction Battalion, or CBs] . And we came back out early when I was here. In fact, before that—in the time of that eight hour day issue. Because he was one of the principal opponents to the change to the eight hour day.

[00:26:01] **HOWARD:** Schomaker was?

[00:26:02] **SELDEN:** Schomaker was. And some of the other ones that you would call—you might call them left-wing communists. The rank-and-filers. I can tell you all their names sometime else, but I can't remember the names now. But there were some of them who were bitterly against the man who was the chairman of the Steward's Council. Was bitterly against. And Schomaker. But this, for Schomaker at least, was part of his process of breaking away from the Communist Party. And as you probably know, he did ultimately testify against Bridges. And Bridges became very, very, very bitter to him.

The Englishman that I mentioned, who I said I thought all these years had refused to pay dues to the company union, remained a close friend of Schomaker's. And they were friends in the years after. Now Schomaker became, by the way—he for a while worked as a pod carrier or something or other down the peninsula there.

The same, maybe the same union that you were later in, I don't know. And then he had some kind of a rooming house. Once I went to interview him when I was trying to write something on the waterfront and Schomaker attitude was that he wasn't going to tell me anything because he was going to write it. But I think he saw himself as writing fiction rather than a document, you know.

[00:27:33] **HOWARD:** Mm-hm. Is he still alive? Or do you know?

[00:27:35] **SELDEN:** I don't know. I would like to know, but I don't know. I would like to have tried to interview him again but I didn't.

[00:27:44] **HOWARD:** So let me see then. You were a Young Socialist organizer in the early '30s—

[00:27:50] **SELDEN:** I wasn't really an organizer. I was only—I was a—I became an organizer because I was an unemployed college student who was a socialist and I could speak a little bit. So I was invited to be the Socialist organizer in Los Angeles and I—you know, I didn't have any idea—of course it was already disintegrating.

What was happening at the time in the Socialist Party was that some of the people, many of them that I knew, had become communists. And the policy—they used to have a policy that was known as boring from within—they stayed in the Socialist Party to wreck it. [Olita O'Connor], who was for a long time the head—she had been the head of the Socialists at Cal when I was the head of the Socialists at Stanford. And we both were Socialist Party members and we went to a—both of us went to a state convention in 1933 where we were associated with what was known as the right wing. The left wing was led by a guy named Busey, but it wasn't really left wing it was just kind of loud or something or other. Anyway, we were both associated with the right wing, at that time, but in just a few months, she was already a communist boring from within. And I didn't get into that, maybe partly by accident. Partly because I was pretty clear that I was not ever in favor of the Communist Party that had no democracy within it. You couldn't be an oppositionist in the Communist Party. I guess I am all of my life an oppositionist, so that wasn't the place for me.

But [pause] what was I going to say about—I was an organizer in Los Angeles only because—oh. It was disintegrating because of the boring from within of the Communist Party and because of Upton Sinclair. Upton Sinclair, who was a Socialist Party member at the convention I went to—in fact he introduced me among others. I was a kind of a rising star. I was the chairman of the Bay District Council of the Socialist Party in San Francisco. Of course it was really nothing. But because the Socialist Party was just about to utterly disintegrate from these two factors: the people going to the communists, the people going to Democrats. Jerry Voorhis [politician] was a socialist and he became a Sinclair supporter. So I—

[END PART ONE/BEGIN PART TWO]

[00:30:14] **HOWARD:** —with their strategies, tactics to some extent. Do you have any idea how effective their waterfront agitational work was, either from the Marine Workers Industrial Union [MWIU], or The Waterfront Worker, or any other activities that they were engaged in prior to the thirty-four strike? What I'm getting at here, let me tell you, is: did the role of the communists have any impact on the direction of the strike or on the consciousness of the workers who were participating?

[00:30:42] **SELDEN:** Oh yes, of course it did. And—but this I know from having studied it, rather than what I knew then at the time. Although of course I did know of their existence. I had—my brother and I had walked—one time the—and some time before this when James Branch was the agitprop director, the communists had a hunger march up Market Street, and my brother and I—this must have been in [pause] 1932. I think it must have been 1932. We would not walk in the street with the communists because we weren't

communists [chuckle] but we walked along the street supporting them. At this point, just by the way, at this point when they got clear—of course the communists invited this—all the way up—they had a permit to walk as far as the library. And they—all the way up they kept chanting with women and children in the front, to the city and all the steps. When they got up there and tried to walk to the city hall steps the cops on horseback went in clubbing them. And I can't find it—I've never really looked though—but I remember when I went home that night I found my picture in the call bulletin of that time because I had seen a couple of people fighting and I thought the one guy was being unjustly beaten up, you know, and I was like. . .

Anyhow, I knew that they were very active with the Unemployed at that time. Then I know what happened—only from the outside and from having studied about from knowing how the communists work—they must have decided—they must have decided to concentrate their efforts on the Longshoremen. And they assigned people, I'm sure, to go down and become longshoremen. Bjorne—John Schomaker was one of them. I believe a man that became my friend—he's still alive. I like him and I use his name here with, you know, some reservation. Certainly isn't going to do any harm but, I think that Herman Mann was one. No, you don't know him now. He's retired. He's an old supporter of Bridges and a decent guy. Nice fellow. I think that a lot of people were assigned by the Party to go down to the waterfront and try to become longshoremen.

[00:33:13] **HOWARD:** Why do you think—this is all speculation—why longshore as opposed to offshore?

[00:33:19] **SELDEN:** Well, it wasn't opposed to it. They also had many—they also had concentration among seamen. And they undoubtedly did. As you said, they had, in those days, the organization of the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Which of course tried to organize seamen and longshoremen into one union.

[00:33:40] **HOWARD:** So the reason I ask this, if I can interrupt, is because I read some documents Sam Darcy and others authored during this period. And if you look at these documents immediately before the '34 strike they're belaboring the fact that they don't have anyone down on the waterfront. He said they had six people on the waterfront and none of them were working longshoremen. So I assume they were just handing out their political tracts or they were working as offshore sailors. And if that's the case, then you really have to wonder how much of an impact they had on the strike.

[00:34:09] **SELDEN:** These are internal documents of the Communist Party?

[00:34:12] **HOWARD:** Yeah, they're—what are they called? It's not political affairs. It's a series of communiques that come out monthly within the Party.

[00:34:21] **SELDEN:** Oh.

[00:34:21] **HOWARD:** They're not really confidential. They were published.

[00:34:23] **SELDEN:** I see.

[00:34:23] **HOWARD:** But unless you had a particular interest in reading it no one would dare to look at them.

[00:34:27] **SELDEN:** Yeah. Well, you see, I don't have any knowledge of what actual relationship these men had to work on the waterfront prior to the strike. What I know is, you see for example of John Schomaker I know that in the early days of the strike, he became a prominent figure.

[00:34:53] **HOWARD:** How?

[00:34:54] **SELDEN:** Well he was a speaker in union meetings.

[00:34:58] **HOWARD:** Was—one thing I’m trying to get at is: why was Schomaker successful? He obviously wasn’t the only person who spoke. Was it that the men identified with the political analysis that he was offering, or was that irrelevant? Was it just simply that he was articulate and that he was a good union man.

[00:35:13] **SELDEN:** Well I wouldn’t know. You see, what I’m trying to say here is that if the communists did as I believed they must have done, assign a lot of their men—well what they had. They didn’t have very many you know, but what they had—to come down and be part of the force on the waterfront. That wouldn’t necessarily mean that they succeeded in getting jobs. The fact that they did or did not succeed in getting jobs would probably not prevent them from mingling with the men, and when the least—and even perhaps being members of the union and being active when the strike began. Now the question would have been—this I don’t know enough detail—the question would have been how did they get—if they did not succeed in getting work—they had in that time what they called a brass. Had a number on it. And you got paid on that brass. And they could even cash these brasses in at the bars, you know, for the money they had coming or some part of it.

Now I think when the strike was over—and then you see, there was going to be the dispatching of men from the union hiring hall. Then there had to be an actual list of men. Now how these men would’ve gotten on that list, I’m not sure. But I think—I’m pretty sure that they managed to do so. Men who probably had never worked actually.

[00:36:58] **HOWARD:** Okay, what’s the basis of your statement that they had an impact on the strike then?

[00:37:05] **SELDEN:** Well you were speaking about the difference between this and the other union, and I—well one is of course The Waterfront Worker itself. Now The Waterfront Worker began in December 1932. I think that’s the first issue. And the you’ve probably seen they have them here, they have them at UC [University of California] . Whether they have every issue, I’m not sure.

[00:37:27] **HOWARD:** Most of them. A few are missing.

[00:37:28] **SELDEN:** I think there were one or two were missing. But you can see the line of the Communist Party. In the first six months, the line of the Communist Party was pro-MWIU. And it was against the AF of L [American Federation of Labor] and the ILA. And then what happened was, when they released—some guy, what’s—I forget his name now, but a hack guy started, got the charter to organize the Local 3879 of the ILA—

[00:38:03] **HOWARD:** Pullman?

[00:38:03] **SELDEN:** Pullman. Yes, Pullman. In June of 1933. And what happened was—that was of course along with article 7A of the whatever it was—

[00:38:16] **HOWARD:** National Recovery Act.

[00:38:17] **SELDEN:** National Recovery Act. NRA. In that situation the men just came in droves into the ILA. And so—

[00:38:28] **HOWARD:** Let me stop you there. Did the groundwork that had been laid by The Waterfront Worker have any impact on—

[00:38:34] **SELDEN:** I don’t think so.

[00:38:34] **HOWARD:** You don’t?

[00:38:35] **SELDEN:** I don't think it had any at all. What happened was, you know some of the old timers one of the accusations they'll make against Bridges is that he wasn't originally a member of the ILA 3879. Which I'm sure he wasn't, because he was an advocate of the MWIU. But, I think you'll see that in the issue of June or July of The Waterfront Worker, there's a sudden change. And I think they even say, all these men have joined the ILA, we've got to go along with it. Not quite that way, but that's what they did, I believe. Now of course I haven't read this in 30 years, you know. But that's the way I remember it. And so, what I think happened was that when The Waterfront Worker changed its line to support the ILA 3879, at that point and not before, Harry Bridges joined the ILA 3879. So while he joined almost in the beginning, [it's] not really in the beginning, and that's what the old timers have against him.

Now there was a guy from the Proletarian Party—again I can't remember his name. There was a guy from the Proletarian Party—do of it, the Proletarian Party? Do you know what it was? It was the Socialist Party of Michigan in 1919. And when elements left the Socialist Party to affiliate with the Third International, the Proletarian Party was the Socialist Party of Michigan and there were two other groups. One based on the foreign language federation of the Socialist Party I think and one in something else. It was [Charles Emil] Ruthenburg in it, it was all these different people.

Now the other two Communist Party groups—one originally called themselves Communist Labor Party I think and the other called itself Communist Party, something or other—they amalgamated into the Communist Party, USA. Proletarian Party never did. They stayed off by themselves, and they didn't amount to much. They amounted to—they had little groups in about three or four places, but one of them was in San Francisco. And they had here—and I knew of it those days, in the '30s—they had a think called the Labor College [sic, California Labor School] . And McDonald—do you know McDonald's book store? Well he's dead now, but there's McDonald's Bookstore [McDonald's Bookshop] still on Ellis Street [sic Turk Street] . He was a lecturer in this Labor College, and part of the Proletarian Party, and so were three or four or five other people. And they had—some either had these guys worked on the waterfront, or some of them did, or they had some contact, and they did help to organize. They helped—what's this guy, Holcum? That his name?

[00:41:20] **HOWARD:** Holman.

[00:41:21] **SELDEN:** Holman?

[00:41:21] **HOWARD:** Bill Holman

[00:41:22] **SELDEN:** Yeah. Helped him to organize the union.

[00:41:26] **HOWARD:** The Proletarian Party did?

[00:41:27] **SELDEN:** The Proletarian Party. I have some quotes about that.

[00:41:31] **HOWARD:** I'd love to see those.

[00:41:33] **SELDEN:** I don't know even what I got them from now, but I'll be glad to look them up and then tell you about them.

[00:41:38] **HOWARD:** Because my understanding is that Holman was extremely conservative politically.

[00:41:41] **SELDEN:** He was. Yes. He was. But nevertheless they worked with him. And then when they went to elect a—when the union was organized, and they went to elect officers, which was in September 1933, and to elect a president, the man from the Proletarian Party ran against Holman, and the communists supported him.

[00:42:08] **HOWARD:** Do you know who that was?

[00:42:09] **SELDEN:** Well I've got his name, but I can't tell you now. I interviewed the guy once, because when I was here he was working as a guard on the waterfront. He lived over in Alameda [California] and I once went over and talked to him. But I didn't know much about interviewing and I didn't get too much out of it. I think I've got a little bit somewhere.

I don't remember now—when I say the communist supported him, I'm pretty sure they voted for him, but what they said to do—there line was support the left wing members of his slate. And that was, you see, Bridges, Schmidt, Bjorne Halling. Those are the ones I know of.

Now this is all before the strike. Bridges, Schmidt, and Bjorne Halling became members of the executive board of 3879 before the strike.

[00:43:05] **HOWARD:** They were a minority position though, weren't they? I don't—

[00:43:08] **SELDEN:** Well, Bridges in particular. Now there are some minutes, which I have some notes on some minutes, of meetings of the executive board of Local 3879, and Bridges had a cute business then of abstaining. He set himself apart from these other people by abstaining on things, not by actually opposing them. He was maybe reasonable. You know he wasn't experienced then in all this kind of business. A few of them were. Holman, I guess, some of the other people, some of them probably had had a little bit of some kind of parliamentary experience. Schmidt, Schmidt must have been on that executive board too. I think. I'm not sure if he was or not.

You asked about the influence of the Communist Party. Now I can't prove it's the Communist Party, but I'm sure it was. There was an advocacy. There was advocacy of coastwise organization. There was a coastwise convention in which Bridges took a big part, in which they elected coastwise officers, and Bridges was not the nominee of the communists but Henry Schmidt was. But he only got—now they elected—oh and he—the influence of the communists—

[00:44:50] **HOWARD:** Did Schmidt win?

[00:44:52] **SELDEN:** No, he only got a handful of votes. They elected a man known as Burglar Lewis. They claim he's known as Burglar Lewis for a good reason [chuckling]. In fact, there's a story. Shall I tell you a derogatory story about Bridges [laugh] in this connection? They claim that on some kind of a job where—maybe it's derogatory from some points of view and not from others. On some job Bridges and Burglar Lewis, and this was before the union I think, were working in the same place, and they were into pilfering the cargo, which I can assure you is not unusual among almost all the men in the waterfront. In fact, it's very difficult not to get yourself—it's an easy thing to do. And so these people were loading up stuff, you know, to leave work with it, and Bridges wouldn't take anything. What they claim is that Burglar Lewis grabbed a hold of him and he stuffs them down his shirt. He says, "Goddamn you, you take a load too. If one gets caught, we all get caught." [laughs]

[00:45:59] **HOWARD:** [laughs] That's why it was Burglar Bill, because he was pilfering from the—

[00:46:02] **SELDEN:** Lewis, yeah, I think so. That's what's said.

[00:46:04] **HOWARD:** I—yeah. [laughs]

[00:46:05] **SELDEN:** Bridges himself actually said one time, speaking about pilfering, exactly the opposite of this, that “Well I wasn’t so bad at that myself in my time.” So I don’t know. I imagine that both are true you know. I too took things, which I am not proud of now. And I imagine that he did, but probably he in general did not.

[00:46:34] **HOWARD:** Just bringing it up through the ‘34 strike then. You felt that the —

[00:46:37] **SELDEN:** Oh! I want to say something else about what I’m sure was their influence. They had this convention, a coastwise convention I think in February of 1934. You know, I know this only by studying it, not by knowing at the time. They advocated what they called a rank-and-file convention. You know this had to be the communists and their supporters. They had a group, by the way, they had a group, it was known as the Albion Hall group. You know about that.

[00:47:08] **HOWARD:** Mm-hmm.

[00:47:09] **SELDEN:** And this included—this was the whole core. Communists always operate through front groups. You know, probably, how they operate. And that’s what this was, but it included a lot of people who were not communists. Probably it was these people who advocated, probably the Albion Hall group probably it was, who advocated a rank-and-file convention, that officials could not be delegates. And I think that that was true of—it was at least in effect in the San Francisco local. And they elected—San Francisco local elected about 20 delegates and about 10 of them were down the line with Bridges and Schmidt. They nominated Schmidt for district president, and the other side nominate Burglar Lewis. Schmidt got the 10 votes from San Francisco, and just 2 or 3 others. Raymond, Washington or someplace where the communists had a little bit of influence, you see, just a little tiny handful. But this—I think probably it was this convention and—oh, my recollection of this convention is that while the communists or pro-Bridges people could not win the organizational control, they could win and did win on the issues and at least laid the foundation for the strike. Including, probably the hiring hall and the 30-hour—I mean the 6-hour day.

So I’m sure that communist influence was—now it was communist lead. There were lots of people not communist, like the Proletarian Party and the other people who certainly went along with these issues. Probably also with the rank-and-file issue of democracy. There was another issue—I don’t know for sure at what point it came up, but there was established, and it’s still effective in a little bit different form in Local 10 today, and that is a term limit. I can show you that Bridges, who claims credit for it, made great efforts to tear it down at various times throughout the history. But in those days that would probably a communist and Bridges democratic issue.

[00:49:25] **HOWARD:** Now I’ve read somewhere where that really harks back to the Wobblies. That was an old thing that they used to implement.

[00:49:31] **SELDEN:** It could be. Bridges at some points claims some kind of credit for it. But the experience I know of was when he attempted to destroy it.

[00:49:40] **HOWARD:** Now let me comment at this point. It sounds as though you’re talking in terms of the influence of the organized communists within the union—

[00:49:47] **SELDEN:** Yes.

[00:49:48] **HOWARD:** Now, what about the opposite side of that? Was there much of an impact ideologically on the rank and file and particularly during the course of the longshore strike or the general strike, was there any

evidence that you saw or have heard about that this was more than a strike? In other words, how would you characterize that '34 strike?

[00:50:03] **SELDEN:** Well of course—have you read in The Western Worker where Sam Darcy compares the '34 strike detail by detail to the Russian Revolution?

[00:50:13] **HOWARD:** I think I did see that somewhere. And he talks about Soviets being established or something?

[00:50:17] **SELDEN:** He's got a series of three articles in which he spells that out. Detailed. Well, insofar as these people read the Western Worker, which no doubt some of them did. What they did read for sure, I'll bet you a big majority of them read The Waterfront Worker. Now The Waterfront Worker didn't have all of this, but I don't remember now. I've got a file of it I think. I don't know whether I have or not. Anyway it did put in popular terms, it tried to translate these things, no doubt, down into popular terms. And then of course they undoubtedly, through their Albion Hall and through their waterfront cell they attracted some people.

[00:51:01] **HOWARD:** Have any sense of how large those cells were, during the—

[00:51:04] **SELDEN:** No. I can't—not in that time at all. I know that in—when I was here, when I came, in World War II, I know only from various friends of mine that later on told me that they'd been part of it that they had quite a big group. But that was in a time you see when it was patriotic to be a communist.

[00:51:22] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Right. Okay, so then your own involvement begins in '36, '37 in Stockton. Is that correct? On the waterfront.

[00:51:30] **SELDEN:** Yes. What I did up there, first I used to go down to the hiring hall in the early morning when they were being dispatched to try to sell our paper at that time which was called Labor Action. But it was considerably anti-Bridges. It was the Socialist Party paper with the Trotskyists having come into the Socialist Party [Workers Party led by James P. Cannon entered into the Socialist Party in 1936].

[00:51:53] **HOWARD:** Even at that early stage it was anti-Bridges?

[00:51:55] **SELDEN:** They came in—well the Trotskyists of course. They knew.

[00:51:59] **HOWARD:** Well what had Bridges done up to that point that would antagonize them?

[00:52:02] **SELDEN:** Well he was known to be a communist.

[00:52:03] **HOWARD:** Just on that alone then?

[00:52:04] **SELDEN:** Well, what had basically happened already—that was part of it, but what had also happened was a split between Bridges and [Harry] Lundeberg, if you're knowledgeable about that. You know that they were very close supporters. What this Englishman told me was that at some early time before the split, Bridges was in the hospital with an ulcer or something of the kind. This guy told me, he said the guy that was there every morning with flowers to greet him was Harry Lundeberg. So I think that they were personally close and Lundeberg, when they organized of the Maritime Federation, that's getting ahead of where we started here, when they organized it, you know, Lundeberg was the only official on the Bridges supported slate to be elected. He was on the Bridges supported slate. They were friendly for a little while. I've written a whole thing about why that split came about. But when it did see—it had already come about by 1936.

[00:53:10] **HOWARD:** Well, what I'm getting at was there anything that Bridges was doing as a trade union leader from '34 to '36 that would antagonize Socialists or Trotskyists? Or was it just simply a question of, he adhered to a different political philosophy? I mean, would Trotskyists have run the union any differently than Bridges would have from '34 to '36?

[00:53:33] **SELDEN:** Well I don't know that intimately. And of course I can't speak too enthusiastically about how Trotskyists would run it now either. I don't know whether they would be any better. I think that in general—I would probably feel that in general there was—[pause]. They stood in those days for democracy except as the very experience that I had, personally. And that is that they would not tolerate a dissident if they could help it. I can't point to anything, but I know that's how they always operated. They would have got rid of a Trotskyist. I don't know, and I never experienced any direct physical violence, though I can show you a threat I got in the mail.

There was talk—there was the accusation—I heard it made by the secretary of the Marine Firemen's Union that I belonged to at the time—there was the accusation that the communists pushed over the side opponents. I don't know if that was true or not true. There was of course violence, violence against scabs, and there was— well you can see, maybe you know what hatred there was against [?Shrimp?] . You know the name [?Shrimp?]

[00:55:04] **HOWARD:** Sounds familiar.

[00:55:05] **SELDEN:** Well [?Shrimp?] was—well the reason they hated him was because he testified against Bridges. But he had been—he's an Australian also, and he was a member of the Communist Party, in the early days, and one of the leaders in it, then he had broke with them and he was really sort of pro-Lundeberg in the early days of the [inaudible] .

[00:55:27] **HOWARD:** So you were handing out this basically anti-Bridges, or—

[00:55:33] **SELDEN:** No, it wasn't—this was a newspaper. Labor Action was a newspaper that was published here in San Francisco. And James Cannon—he was the leader of the Trotskyists—had come out here. But it was a newspaper that was related to everything but within the issues on the waterfront it supported Lundeberg. That's against Bridges. Now that's a [pause] that's a long and complex story. Maybe you want to go into it. I don't know.

[00:56:08] **HOWARD:** Just insofar as did it make any difference to the men? Do you have any sense that it would have?

[00:56:11] **SELDEN:** Oh no. Well, no. Where I was in Stockton, I didn't quite sell any papers and I didn't mean anything. And of course that's kind of a backwater place. They were just—the man who was the head of the union in Stockton was a pro-Bridges man, only because that was the way to power. And later on when the big split came he went with the other side

[00:56:39] **HOWARD:** How long did you work in Stockton?

[00:56:41] **SELDEN:** Well I worked a little bit before the '36 strike [?'34?]. Then when the strike came, at first they told me to get lost and then they said—

[00:56:54] **HOWARD:** The union told you to get lost?

[00:56:55] **SELDEN:** Well, I went down and asked them if they wanted me to picket and they said no.

[00:56:59] **HOWARD:** Why?

[00:57:00] **SELDEN:** Well I was just a casual extra. I wasn't a member you see. So I got a job washing dishes or something or other and I lost that job and I went back and they said yes we want you to picket and they assigned me to a picket group. And the strike lasted, you know, it was a hundred days. It was a long strike, all through Christmas. And we'd picket six hours on and thirty off, and then on. Then, just before the strike ended they called all of us extra in to some kind of a subterranean place and they told us to get lost. I think that the thing was that they didn't want to be obligated to any of us after the strike. But what actually happened was that the strike soon ended after that, and that they did in fact set up rotary hiring for us extra men. Previously the secretary just pick out who he wanted.

[00:57:57] **HOWARD:** From among the extras.

[00:57:58] **SELDEN:** Yes. Now they fixed up this rotary hiring. And so then I worked a few jobs. There wasn't very much work then in Stockton. That was in 1937. The CIO was just blossoming. A woman who had been my girlfriend in Stockton had gone to Los Angeles. For these two reasons I went down there and went to work in the steel plant down there.

[00:58:19] **HOWARD:** Why did you wind up in Stockton for that period?

[00:58:22] **SELDEN:** I had gone there because it was the state headquarters of the Socialist Party.

[00:58:25] **HOWARD:** That was the state headquarters?

[00:58:26] **SELDEN:** Yes.

[00:58:26] **HOWARD:** Why were they located there?

[00:58:28] **SELDEN:** Well, I don't know. Probably some accidental historical reason that I don't know about. Of course it did so happen that the state secretary of the Socialist Party was the wife at that time of a man, [?Harold Jacoby?] , who was a professor at [?CLP?] .

[00:58:49] **HOWARD:** Oh.

[00:58:49] **SELDEN:** So it's possible that the headquarters were moved there on her account. I don't really know. But there was faction fight going on in the Socialist Party, you see, between the so-called militants and the old guard, and I was involved in that.

[00:59:07] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about the '36, '37 strike. Anything eventful happen in Stockton? I've never read anything about what happened in Stockton.

[00:59:15] **SELDEN:** No, Stockton was just a backwater. All we did is just, you know, maintain the picket line. That's all.

[00:59:22] **HOWARD:** Do you know anything about what was happening in the Bay Area here, vis-a-vis the role of the communists for instance, or something like that. That seemed to be a much more sedate struggle than the '34 strike. Is that correct?

[00:59:33] **SELDEN:** The '34 strike, you see, was a strike of the [pause] oppressed longshoremen that were just organizing, just had organized. And all the other crafts, the seamen and even the shore side workers really just fell in behind them in great support.

In '36 you see, the situation was altogether different. The unions were to some extent already established. Especially the longshoremen. The sailor union was not so established, either internally in getting rid of its conservative old line leadership, or—

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[01:00:31] **SELDEN:** Which had been a big issue advocated by the communists within the longshoremen's union. It had been opposed by the—essentially by the old line leadership, which still existed in the Sailors' Union [of the Pacific] and the Marine Firemen's Union. [?Paul Scherenberg?] who was—the Sailors' Union—was the Secretary of the State of the Federation of Labor what there was of it. And of course he didn't go for anything like this but they had managed to organize this Maritime Federation and of course when it was actually going to take place the right-wingers participated in it and elected most of the officials except Lundeberg.

That was all in 1935 I guess. Soon after Lundeberg was elected they moved to—they move the headquarters. Lundeberg have been a patrolman in Seattle [Washington] but he came down to San Francisco to establish the headquarters of the Maritime Federation. Soon after that the split developed between Lundeberg and Bridges. You'll get all kinds of different stories. Some people will tell you that they split over a skirt, who was Norma Perry, who have been secretary to Bridges and presumably more than a secretary. And similarly to Lundeberg. I knew her. She joined the Socialist Party and I remember we had a convention here when Lundeberg came and spoke for the Socialist Party in San Francisco in the convention in San Francisco. But that's a lot of baloney. I think. I read—of course the materials on this are hard to find but it appears to me quite clear—let me tell you another thing that's kind of interesting. There's a guy, again I can't think of his name right now—a man who was the communist, later bitterly denounced by the communists. But in those days he'd come down from Seattle with Lundeberg and he was the editor I guess and he worked on the paper of the Maritime Federation.

[01:02:52] **HOWARD:** [?Mazzi?] or something like that? [?Mazzi?] ? Is that—

[01:02:55] **SELDEN:** No. No. I can't think of his name right now but anyway —

[01:03:00] **HOWARD:** [Ralph] Chaplin?

[01:03:01] **SELDEN:** What?

[01:03:02] **HOWARD:** Chaplin or something?

[01:03:02] **SELDEN:** No. He was much later. And Chaplin I think came from IWW. But this guy—I don't know if he was ever really the editor but he worked on it—he later went to sea, back to sea in the National Maritime Union. Once I interviewed him and I asked him I said what was the basic cause of the split between Bridges and Lundeberg and he said “the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.”

[01:03:31] **HOWARD:** [laugh]

[01:03:33] **SELDEN:** Now of course actually the split took place maybe before this I don't know maybe not. What he was really talking about—what really happened was this: that when the '34 strike the longshoremen were established as a union with a contract with the employer's and with a radical leadership Bridges. The Sailors Union had supported that strike but they came out of it without any real contract and still bound by the old hog bound [sic] leadership.

Lundeberg had been a patrolman in Seattle but the rest of them were conservatives. Lundeberg became president of the Maritime Federation and with that and with the communists—there were communist of course within the Sailors Union that had no doubt going to sea to organize the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Maybe they recruited more people and they certainly had some. They gradually increased their influence. But they didn't have either one. That's to say, contract or left wing leadership.

The issue developed—the conflict developed around the issue of what was called job action. Now job actions had been carried on very extensively by the longshoremen immediately after the '34 strike and into '35 at least. And I remember some of the men told me we sometimes had several job actions a day. They used these to establish working conditions. Later on of course the arbitration system had fastened itself more and more on the union with Bridges' support. That was Bridges' agreement with the employer's to establish this arbitration issue, machinery, and that put an end to job actions effectiveness. But I said it had been a widespread practice among the longshoremen. But among the seamen, who didn't have any contract and didn't have any arbitration job action became a very important matter. That's how they gradually took steps to establish their union and also to build up their opposition to the conservative leadership.

But now—and when the Seventh Congress of the Comintern came in you see—the Seventh Congress of the Comintern represented the end of Third Period communism [position held by Communist Third International from 1928-1933, marked by hostility to reformists and establishment of dual unions], as it was called. The end of dual unionism and the beginnings of the People's [sic, Popular] Front policy which was of course particularly prevalent in England and France and Spain. But it also mentions support of [President Franklin] Roosevelt. They didn't support Roosevelt in '30 the communists certainly didn't support Roosevelt in '32, or Upton Sinclair in '34. Not at all. They denounced these people. But in '36, they ran—what's his name—[Earl] Browder. They ran Browder under the slogan “ [Republican candidate Alf] Landon must be defeated at all costs.” [laughs] Obviously you don't defeat Landon at all costs by voting for Browder.

Bridges and the ILA 3879 and Sam Darcy's policy as agitprop director of 3879 had to be the policies of the Seventh Congress ahead of time. Because the Congress was in 1935 and all of this happened in 1934 you see. Some people say that Darcy was Lovestonite [communist who deviates from party policy, especially about trade unions] . I don't know what Lovestonite meant anyway really, you know, in these terms. But he and the communists here did follow this—they had to, as you read whatever The Western Worker said there in June or July—why did they come over and support 3879 instead of the Marine Workers Industrial Union which they'd always been doing.

[01:08:06] **HOWARD:** Okay let me ask you a question on that issue then. Why do you think—you're not suggesting that Bridges was in fact a member of the Communist Party subject to their discipline are you?

[01:08:15] **SELDEN:** Well, that's a big question. When you say subject to their discipline, no. Because he was almost always from the very beginning too big for that. He laid down the discipline almost. Whether he joined the Communist Party or not—I think probably he did. There's, you know, conflicting testimony. Schomaker and I can't think of the other guy's name—there were two of them that we're buddies. But of course the one that stayed with the Communist Party hated Schomaker in later years. The two of them were supposed to have gone what used to be The Co-op restaurant. It used to be right down on the foot of Market Street there—and met with Bridges to try to recruit him to the Communist Party. And Schomaker claims to have left there with his membership application and to have collected dues from him thereafter. Whereas the other guy says that's a big lie, he never joined. That he's too smart to join. He's an alien [from another country] , he couldn't, and this and that. So I don't know. I don't know anyway—

[01:09:28] **HOWARD:** So then why would Bridges have followed the dictates of Sam Darcy?

[01:09:32] **SELDEN:** You see [clears throat] this is what I was going to say. When you asked whether Bridges was a communist, you have to define communist in many ways. If you define a communist as one who joins the Party, who subjects himself to indoctrination, does Jimmie Higgins work [unglamorous part of organizing, based on an Upton Sinclair story] , carries out orders of the Party, Bridges never did those things. He was always much too big for that. But if you define the Party in other practical terms as an effective—as a group, a league of groups within the trade union movement, who follow a particular align to the advantage of the Communist Party, Bridges was the head of it, all these years, starting right after the '34 strike. What his relation was with Darcy, that would be very—I'd like—[laugh]. Is Darcy still alive?

[01:10:49] **HOWARD:** He lives in New Jersey. I just found out.

[01:10:51] **SELDEN:** Because he used to be in the furniture business in Philadelphia or somewhere and I always would have liked to have talked to that guy if he would talk. I don't know if he will or not. I remember I knew a—I lived out here in the Sunnyside Housing Project [San Francisco, California] when I first came here, and I knew a woman who was more or less of a communist and I remember once saying something to her about Bridges. And she said, "Oh my God, what trouble we had with him."

Well I imagine so. You see he was [pause] he was too big a shot to be given orders. What happened to him in the beginning, well first he comes into the union. He's an oppositionist on the executive board who abstains. Who more or less separates himself from the more compromising policies. And then when the strike committee is set up he becomes the chairman of the strike committee, and stays there, and at the end of the strike is elected president of Local 3879. All that time his name is in all the headlines. He is not going to be told by Darcy or anybody else what to do. And they're not going to expel him. They're not going to break with him, not as long as he goes along. So I don't know what their relations are. You see he has, for one thing, he is built up by the communists. For example, how does he have any kind of support in Raymond or someplace else where these little communist groups are. And he's built up by The Waterfront Worker and by The Western Worker and he realizes that. Then he has undoubtedly a basic—I'm sure he always had what I would call an alienation from the conservative American labor movement.

What were his values? Well, you know some people—you can make a very big point of the fact that, well he gets, I'm sure he gets now in retirement substantially more than an ordinary longshoreman does. Not at all comparable to the other labor leaders. Some people make that very greatly to his credit. But the same thing was also true of Harry Lundeberg, his bitter enemy. They just had a different set of values. They valued power, not money. And I think he was always there. He valued power. Also, he saw that power in a different way. He could always put it in terms of rank-and-file. It never was rank-and-file, but it has some relationship to it. He used always a rank-and-file terminology and for many years, he was of course, he was always pro-Russia.

You know I was thinking of you when I was walking down here, I couldn't define—it's an interesting question. What made Bridges as pro-Russia? I'm not sure. You probably know. I don't know what his position is now relative to the Communist Party, but it was very bitterly anti-Communist Party a few years ago. You know that, do you?

[01:14:36] **HOWARD:** Whose position?

[01:14:37] **SELDEN:** Bridges.

[01:14:37] **HOWARD:** Bridges?

[01:14:38] **SELDEN:** Oh yes.

[01:14:39] **HOWARD:** I didn't know that.

[01:14:40] **SELDEN:** Yes. Well I'll tell you where to—I can't document this or tell you detail because its—time has sort of passed me. But, I mean, when I was no longer even too much interested. And yet it was 10 years ago or so. The Communist Party ultimately did not support his negotiating position with the employers. Now take for instance in the '71 strike, the big issue, and it remains a big issue to this day, is the steady man [workers employed directly by the stevedoring companies] . And Bridges just simply flatly refused to represent the men or the steady man. He absolutely betrayed the strike from start to finish in my opinion. That strike was a total waste of time, because he never lead that strike on the issues that the men cared about.

Now of course he could always—he's always an expert in playing one local against another. It was above all in San Francisco that this was an issue, because this is where it came to a head first. Now Pedro and everywhere else suffer all the consequences so the steady man business now, but here was a place where, of course this is the place where the union started, as well as where Bridges came from. In that time—ell there's other items of history too. Do you know that Bridges really wanted to get us into the Teamsters Union [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] ? Well that was one place where they broke. Now Schmidt, and presumably other people, the old timers, broke with him, perhaps on that issue—

[01:16:22] **HOWARD:** When was that? Early '60s? Late '50s?

[01:16:24] **SELDEN:** No, later—

[01:16:26] **HOWARD:** Later?

[01:16:26] **SELDEN:** I think so. It's awful hard for me to tell you what year is what year.

[01:16:30] **HOWARD:** I think that there may have been overtures going on for a number of years, because I think I remember something in the late '50s when the ILA re-affiliated with the AF of L. Bridges talked about a confederation of transport unions—

[01:16:41] **SELDEN:** One time was—I don't know if you know this—that when they put out that phony head of the Teamsters union because, what, he got indicted for something or other, convicted of something or other, and there was to be a succession. Bridges supported [Teamster president Jimmy] Hoffa. Before he was elected Bridges supported Hoffa, that gangster crook. Absolutely.

[01:17:08] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Hoffa's a complex character apparently. He was very militant on collective bargaining. The crime that he engaged in apparently wasn't for his own benefit, but it was to advance the cause of organizing so—

[01:17:19] **SELDEN:** But he sure had ties with the underworld.

[01:17:22] **HOWARD:** Probably. I don't know any Teamster official who doesn't. [chuckle]

[01:17:25] **SELDEN:** Oh, I'm sure. Well, there were. There was a man in Missouri you know—

[01:17:30] **HOWARD:** St. Louis [Missouri] .

[01:17:31] **SELDEN:** —St. Louis, who had some chance. If you really wanted to support a decent man for—that was the guy. I forget his name.

[01:17:37] **HOWARD:** Gibbins or something like that?

[01:17:37] **SELDEN:** Gibbins, Harold Gibbins. Yeah, it was Harold Gibbins. Then he became Hoffa's right hand man. He came through here. I heard him speak at Cal. Hoffa, and Gibbins was with him.

Anyway, do you know the name [?Watson?] ? I can't think of first names right now. [?Watson?] was the editor of The Dispatcher for many, many years and he was Bridges' crony. His son is a friend of mine. Chiefly active now in support of the farmworkers. He's a clerk on the waterfront. Anyway he told me that—I didn't know this—but his father also finally broke with Bridges before he died. Before his father died. And another issue on which some of these people broke was Bridges cronyism with [San Francisco mayor Joseph] Alioto.

[01:18:34] **HOWARD:** I didn't know that.

[01:18:36] **SELDEN:** Oh yes. And you know what happened with Alioto is Alioto appointed Bridges supporter crooks to office in the city. And one of them was his chief dispatcher. Probably a chief dispatcher now. But he's a crook. He's an extortionist. And you can read it right in The [San Francisco] Chronicle. Right in the headline of The Chronicle. The guy calls up—they made a tape of his telephone calls you know, and they put it in The Chronicle. He called up and he— [Joe] Mosely, that's the guy's name, Mosely called up and he says, "I hope you got that ten grand I sent you." And Mosely says "I say every man should get his share, if it's only ten cents." Then he plead guilty to escape, but he plead guilty to perjury and did a year in jail, and when he got back out got reelected chief dispatcher.

[01:19:30] **HOWARD:** Was he a Black guy?

[01:19:31] **SELDEN:** Black crook, yes. And then there's Jenkins. Alioto appointed Dave Jenkins, a neighbor of mine.

[01:19:39] **HOWARD:** Okay. We're getting ahead. I want to talk about that though. That's relevant. So we're up through the '34 strike. We've covered the '36 period. The next crucial period in the union's history, it seems to me, is the war itself.

[01:19:52] **SELDEN:** Yeah. I want to say one thing more about the '36 strike though. The issue of the '36 strike, you see, was really the split with the sailors union. And I don't really know of course what actually went on. They claim, you see, the longshoremen claim that they were getting nothing out of the '36 strike that it was only for the benefit of the sailors union. And there was an awful lot of infighting and a Trotskyist—what was his name I can't think—a Trotskyist became the editor for a while of The Voice of the Federation.

[01:20:25] **HOWARD:** Barney Mays. That's what I was thinking of.

[01:20:26] **SELDEN:** Barney Mayes. Yes. I knew Barney Mays slightly, because I was on the state committee of the Socialist Party at that time you know. And Barney Mays was a—I don't know. I don't know him well enough to judge him, but he wasn't guilty of any crimes that the communists accused him of except the crime of being a Trotskyist and supporting Lundeberg. In those days, Lundeberg near as I could see—and I think it would be fair all around to say—Lundeberg in those days followed how much more militant and even maybe democratic policy although there was never any democracy in the Sailors' Union really. They had a situation you see Lundeberg was a man of stature and able man and there wasn't anybody in the Sailors' Union really that compared to him at least among the leadership people.

[01:21:23] **HOWARD:** Didn't Lundeberg settle without conferring with I guess what was the ILA at the time?

[01:21:28] **SELDEN:** 'Thirty-six?

[01:21:29] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and that was the bone of contention between the two?

[01:21:32] **SELDEN:** I don't know. I really don't know what happens in that kind of time. And if it was, it was a product of reprehensible infighting on both sides I think. I think it was a matter of—

[01:21:46] **HOWARD:** Yeah. There's no question about that.

[01:21:47] **SELDEN:** What happened to Lundeberg later was an unforgivable though. He became a—he broke strike on the Canadian seamen and various things like that. But each of them pretty much did dirt to the other. I was going to sea in the Firemen's Union [Pacific Coast Marine Firemen, Oilers, Watertenders and Wipers Association] . And the Firemen's Union was a little bit split both ways you know. These things are really too complex I think to know for really what happened except that both of them did it probably did reprehensible things.

[01:22:18] **HOWARD:** Among the men how is the split reflected? Was it simply a question like say in the Marine Fire Workers or something, if there was a Bridges and Lundeberg type faction where they characterized as syndicalism vs. I don't know what political unionism or were they light just like you identified with the personalities of these individual leaders or did it break down along those lines at all?

[01:22:39] **SELDEN:** Well it was mostly bitter factionalism for or against Bridges and the Communist Party and they were considered just like this. [gestures with hands] Bridges and the Communist Party.

[01:22:50] **HOWARD:** And what was the visit basis of a rank-and-file worker being opposed to the Communist Party or favoring the Communist Party? Were the ideological reasons or just sort of a gut level—

[01:22:59] **SELDEN:** It's hard to—I would say there was a mixture of syndicalism and right-wing opposition to Bridges and the Communist Party. And that this syndicalist part disappeared over a period of time. Lundeberg was surely heavily influenced by the IWW in the earlier days but then you know that the Trotskyists—and I never thought this was a good thing—the Trotskyists, and James P. Cannon, specifically I think had a very great deal to do with the Sailors' Union going back to the AF of L instead of remaining independent. Of course their position was that they wouldn't be able to survive as independent against the encroachment of the longshoremen and the rejection of the more conservative unions.

[01:24:00] **HOWARD:** Okay let's move on to the war then.

[01:24:06] **SELDEN:** That I know more about.

[01:24:08] **HOWARD:** You came on to the Waterfront in '45. What are you doing during the war?

[01:24:20] **SELDEN:** Let's just hastily go over that. After the '36 strike I went down to Los Angeles and I got a job through being recommended by someone in the Columbia Steel plant which is U.S. Steel. Just had signed a contract for the CIO Union, and I took a very active part in the union there and I was a delegate to the CIO Council when it was first organized. I got laid off and I found out afterward—I got laid off and in effect got blacklisted because I was too active in the union. And I went to sea, through this political manipulation I was able to get into the Firemen's Union in kind of a pro-Lundeberg set up. So I went to sea but I never really—I didn't like it very much. It was very hot in the engine room and I didn't stay in that. When the war came on shipyard work began to open up in San Pedro, repair work. So I quit going to sea and I got to work there and I got into that union and I took a very leading part in that union for a little while. And then I got drafted.

[01:25:38] **HOWARD:** Your job wasn't deferred then.

[01:25:40] **SELDEN:** No one of the reasons was you see that because I was my whole interest was in the union I never became a very good worker. And in the shipyard I only had an intermediate rating. I quit working there and I went to work someplace else where I had got the full ship-fitter rating. But it's not under the jurisdiction of the Shipyard Union, it was under the jurisdiction of the Steelworkers [United Steelworkers] . And then the company apply for my deferment but it was rejected. I don't know for what reason and I appealed it and I was drafted.

[01:26:10] **HOWARD:** Now the draft board obviously had to know of your political activities right?

[01:26:13] **SELDEN:** No, I don't know.

[01:26:14] **HOWARD:** Oh really?

[01:26:15] **SELDEN:** I don't know if they did or not, you see because the draft board was in San Francisco—not San Francisco and Los Angeles and I was out on San Pedro and I just don't know. They may have the funny thing is that I assumed when I went in the Army, I thought sure I was going to I was going to die. Because I assumed that military intelligence had me listed and they just put me out where I'd be got rid of. Well that didn't happen. Other people got sent to the South Pacific and I didn't. Of course I was a little bit old already then you know for—a little bit older than the young men they really had. Now they put me in the medics, and then home on a furlough [employee on temporary leave due to needs of employer] one time I met a friend from the Sailors' Union who told me that there was a new regulation. They needed men going to see so much that you could get back, if you had sea going experience you could get out of the Army and go back to sea. So I got out of the army just before my officers had been alerted two or three times already. And then they went over to Europe and they got involved in the Battle of the Bulge. That's what they were in. But I got out and I went to sea and then—

[01:27:25] **HOWARD:** What year was that that you got out?

[01:27:27] **SELDEN:** I got out in 1944. In October and 19—

[01:27:28] **HOWARD:** And near the end of the war. It's beginning to wind down by then, right?

[01:27:33] **SELDEN:** Yeah we thought so but then the Battle of the Bulge threatened it again, you know? It was beginning to wind down here but of course not in the South Pacific. I tried to go back to see when they drafted me and the [Marine] Firemen's Union told me, "Get the hell out of here. You weren't here when we wanted you. Go on in the Army." It might have saved my life because friends of mine went down on ships during the two years that I was in the Army. When I came back out I managed to stay on ships that went to Hawaii and Central America and I stayed out of the war zone.

[01:28:07] **HOWARD:** So then in the '44 you got out of the Army because you had your experience as a seaman and went on the ship to the South Pacific.

[01:28:14] **SELDEN:** And I would have kept going on the ships but the manpower commission [War Manpower Commission] did me dirt. You see after you sail for a certain length of time, you're entitled to a certain amount of time ashore. That was the rule. And so I sailed and I was entitled to 30 days ashore, and they gave me a work permit and I went down and I worked as an extra longshoreman. Then I made another trip and then came back. I was entitled to 23 days ashore and they wouldn't give me a work permit. They're going to starve me, I'm entitled to 23 days ashore but I've got a wife had a baby now. And if you don't go in the war zone you don't make peanuts going to sea. So they want to starve me into going back to sea. That made me so mad I

thought to hell with those sons of bitches. I went down and applied for a job and went to work as a longshoreman.

[01:28:58] **HOWARD:** In '45?

[01:28:59] **SELDEN:** In '45.

[01:29:00] **HOWARD:** Out of which local?

[01:29:02] **SELDEN:** San Francisco.

[01:29:03] **HOWARD:** San Francisco. Okay, now I'm going to ask you, a major part of my research deals with the situation during the war—the No-strike Pledge, the rank-and-file's perception of that, and a point that Stan's talked about, the dissolution of work groups. I don't know if you've ever read his writing on this or not. But let me first ask you: the changes in technology, the changes in the work processes that occurred during the war, particularly lifting of sling load limits to speed up productivity. Do you have any sense of that? I know you came in at the tail end of this process but you must have been talking with the men.

[01:29:39] **SELDEN:** No, I don't think that that was so significant. The main thing that happened of course was that Bridges and the Communist Party were the ultimate supporters of the No-strike Pledge. And consequently wages didn't go up in the war time. They stayed right where they were. Now one important point here that I can tell you happened before I ever came here. Bridges as you know was the head of the CIO on the West Coast. And I was working on the shipyard and the shipyard union Local 9 [Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America] in San Pedro. In fact I became the chief shop steward in what was then known as the Los Angeles Shipyard. It's called something else now it's part of a chain. But anyway I can tell you that one time—

[END PART THREE/BEGIN PART FOUR]

[01:30:39] **HOWARD:** Go ahead.

[01:30:40] **SELDEN:** Bridges came to speak to the men in the Los Angeles Shipyard in a meeting arranged on company time and property. And this is what he said—this was obviously after Hitler had attacked Russia. I want to go back in a few minutes to just before Hitler attacked Russia to something else. But at this point—and I'm especially conscious to this because I had been—I was not then I guess, but I had been the chief shop steward in that yard. And Bridges said “The job of shop stewards is not to take up grievances but to speed production.” And that's indelibly in my mind, what Bridges said. Now not long before that—I don't know exactly when this meeting was, but in May or June I think of 1941—and it was in June '41, wasn't it, that Hitler invaded Russia?

[01:31:39] **HOWARD:** I think so.

[01:31:39] **SELDEN:** I'm quite sure that this was in June 1941. Before that invasion there was a strike of the auto workers [United Automobile Workers] at North American Aircraft in Inglewood [California] .

[01:31:54] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I'm familiar with that.

[01:31:56] **SELDEN:** And that North American Aircraft local was led by communists. And they struck for—I don't know what, I don't know any of the details of it—but probably for a good reason. And I remember that one day I went over to join the picket line in Inglewood to support the strike. And that was the day that

President Roosevelt called out the National Guard or the Army, whatever it was, to disperse the pickets and I experienced the bayonet being put right here and the guy said, "Walk back." So I walked back. [chuckle]

At that time, Bridges came down and—I have forgotten his name. One of the big leaders of the Auto Workers Union. They came down and they—

[01:32:51] **HOWARD:** [?Frankenstein?] .

[01:32:51] **SELDEN:** [?Frankenstein?] is right. Certainly that's name. I've been trying to think of it. He was a man you could never really identify.

[01:32:58] **HOWARD:** I know.

[01:32:58] **SELDEN:** He was tied up with the communists in some ways and with the company in others. He was a chameleon, I think. Anyway he and Bridges were there and they hatched up some kind of a deal, and the strike was settled. But one of the conditions of settling the strike was that the company did not take back eight leaders of the strike. My guess would be that each one of those eight leaders were Communist Party members. I know about one of them. Because what happened was that the different CIO unions agreed to absorb the eight guys and our union absorbed one of them. And for once I can remember his name: his name was [?Jimmy Logan?] .

[?Jimmy Logan?] came to work in the Los Angeles Shipyard where I was then the chief shop steward. I remember to that somehow while he was clear a communists and I was at Trotskyist and they were already of course—by the time he got there, I guess Hitler had already attacked Russia but it probably took a little while for this to percolate down and to effectiveness on the men so that you see an earlier time while communist and Trotskyists were not very friendly, both of us had been against the war as long as Stalin was tied up with Hitler, the communists were against the war. So it was a little bit less unfriendly. I remember some slightly friendly relationships with Mr. [?Logan?] and I do remember in some way taking up some beef with him. I think he became a shop steward and his department which was the plate hanging department. Some kind of relationship.

Now this relates to something that happened to me as a longshoreman. Maybe I better just go on and mention this. I don't know if you want these personal details but it shows you something about how the Communist Party relationship is just some of these things. When some years later—well it must have been three or four years later I guess, in June. It was June 9, 1945. I applied for work as a longshoreman. I was interviewed by some guy representing the union and the employers and asked a bunch of questions in the application and given a temporary card to go to work. And I went down to get a job. At that time, obviously they were hiring me, they were hiring lots of people. Many, many, many Blacks had come in from the South. They will preparing for a big amount of work out of the Port of San Francisco for the South Pacific.

[01:35:43] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you one question there, that triggered something. Why were the Blacks from the south brought in? Were they recruited in deliberately down there? or do you think it was just a natural influx? They're attracted to the ILWU because of its stand on racial policies or do you have any feelings about that?

[01:35:56] **SELDEN:** Of course I think that the Blacks were flowing from the South to the West Coast not only as longshoreman but they also filled up the shipyards. Although some of them, foreseeing there wouldn't be any work after the war on the shipyard, some of them worked in the shipyard and then came over as longshoreman. It's also my opinion, and I'm pretty sure this is the opinion of some of the Blacks, that Bridges particularly invited them into the union. And that well they actually recruited many from down there. Some of them had

been longshoremen in the South. Of course in the South, longshoremen's unions are segregated. I think they still are. I don't know. They were.

[01:36:38] **HOWARD:** Just recently they overcame that, in 1979.

[01:36:39] **SELDEN:** They had the Black locals and the white locals. Many of them were longshoremen. You know, I just want to touch on this, because you asked me before about was there a difference, was there a policy toward racism related to the communists and I think it was. The only longshoremen on the waterfront at the time of the 1934 strike were essentially men who had been or who inherited jobs, subsequently I think, to men who had been strike breakers. In 1919 Blacks were brought in as strike breakers and I think particularly at Pier 29 I heard about that. And these Blacks stayed there through all the years. And of course there must have been at one time very bitter hostility and I imagine some of the hostility still continued. These were the only people, and one or two of them became second level leadership and were elected to some office in the union. But in the wartime vast numbers came in from the South. And the Communist Party unquestionably always advocated a policy of racial equality. And they probably had been really helpful in overcoming the prejudice of white workers. I would assume they had.

There was this big number of workers had come in at the time that I got hired and the dispatch was still from a little tiny hiring hall. Crummy, dirty little place on Clay Street, right just across the street from the Embarcadero. So you'd go down there, you'd go down there to try and get line up for a job. And you couldn't get more than this far away from anybody else. They'd have rotary hiring, so they had my number. I put my, you know I signed in or whatever I did at that time. We had a brass I guess at that time. And you put it in some way. I've forgotten how it was. And then they pull it out when your turn comes to call.

And so I went down the first day. I didn't get called. Now let me preface this by saying, I was very well aware as a socialist and a Trotskyist of what I regarded as the communist control of this union. And I certainly did not care to be identified as a Trotskyist. And I didn't know anybody and I didn't want to know anybody.

[01:39:18] **HOWARD:** You didn't know Stan at that point.

[01:39:20] **SELDEN:** Well Stan was—no, no. Stan's much younger and he came many, many years later.

[01:39:23] **HOWARD:** Yeah. I thought he shipped out of San Pedro in the war or something. I was wondering if maybe you come in contact there.

[01:39:28] **SELDEN:** No, I didn't know him. I don't know when he went. He did go to sea some time. No, I didn't know him. As I said, many years later. I did know him. I did know him not so very many years later. But he didn't come as a longshoreman until many, many years later.

I went down, didn't get a job the first day. I went down the second day to get a job, and all of the sudden I see amongst the crowd [?Jimmy Logan?] . One of the last men I'd ever care to see. Well I tried to move away and I couldn't possibly. And soon we're face to face. Well, just to show you what our relations were, I said—I tried to talk on something innocuous. So I tried to talk about race relations, you know something we agree on. And [?Jimmy Logan?] said to me, just to show you how our—he says “What do you think of my party now?” And his party now was that the Communist Party was just kicking out Earl Browder. And he was delighted, because Earl Browder you know, he was saddled with all the crimes of social patriotism in the war. That shows you, how he said “my party” and “your party.” Well, I don't know how we got through that conversation. And I got a job and each day I thought, “You know, the axe will fall. I don't know what will happen to me but the axe will fall.”

I never saw [?Jimmy Logan?] again but once. Once I was lined up for pay and I saw him. I have no idea what happened to him. He got drafted, or something. Never saw or heard of him again, directly. But that was I told you on—that was, I must have met him on the 11 of June 1945. Every day I thought the ax would fall. Nothing happened. I went to work. I worked a year. We had the '46 strike. I was a member of a gang and I picketed with the gang. And I did this and that. Came out of the strike on the other end. I was called up for an investigation for the union. At that time I got scared and I thought they're going to ask me about 1936. And how am I going to prove I went up to Stockton. They had no records of anything. But I told a guy a story about what had happened to me in Stockton and it rang true to him, you know. So he wrote out a statement saying that I had been in Stockton, had worked in Stockton and had been there in good standing through the '36 strike.

[01:42:11] **HOWARD:** Why was that relevant to this investigation?

[01:42:13] **SELDEN:** Well I was afraid that it might come up, you know, where were you in the '36 strike. They're liable to ask people where were you in the strike to question whether you were a strike breaker.

[01:42:24] **HOWARD:** Oh, okay.

[01:42:25] **SELDEN:** See? So nothing happened. So it came up for the investigation, and I knew the investigation committee was packed with Stalinists. And the chairman was a well known Stalinist. I knew him by then. He was a gang boss. But nothing happened. Nothing happened.

I should tell you this. Once much earlier after I'd only been there about six months, they laid off about 800 men. I would have been one, except that they made an exception of all men who were veterans or had been in the Merchant Marines. So I was not included. It was mostly Black men, so there was a great resistance to it in the union. And they had a meeting in the Civic Auditorium. And all of us permit men—they called them that, we were you know, probationary members—had to sit up above. But there was a microphone up there, manned by one of the gang bosses who was a Stalinist. I knew him. He didn't know me. I finally got so incensed that they were going to lay off all of these men that I got up there to speak. I was just a probationary member. And they didn't get to me. They cut it off. If I had spoken, I'm sure I'd have been eliminated. What happened, because I'll show you what. I was not called to their attention, as I would have been if I had spoken.

So, I went through the investigation. That was in April 1947. And in—

[01:44:03] **HOWARD:** This was to investigate you to see if you were suitable for being a member of the union?

[01:44:07] **SELDEN:** Yes. Yes. And they send you a letter as to what you've got to do. And then so you show up. And they ask you questions. And things go on. That's all. See I was among those who had never paid my dues late, had never had a charge against me of any kind and so forth. So I got in. That was in April 1947. [hum of air conditioner in background]

In January 1948, a new secretary was elected. A man who's still my friend who's name is Reino Erkkila. If you want to talk to a just kind of an ordinary guy whose father was a long time longshoreman, whose father knew Bridges well. Reino knew him. There's a—anybody talk to him. Nice guy. Just for ordinary, any ordinary—

[01:44:48] **HOWARD:** That's what I'm after.

[01:44:49] **SELDEN:** President of the union and business agent and secretary treasurer and everything under the sun. Decent man. I met him just the other day on the street. He doesn't live so far from my neighborhood. We're friends still.

Well he got elected secretary. And when he moved in—

[01:45:06] **HOWARD:** Of Local 10?

[01:45:07] **SELDEN:** Yes. And when he move into his desk and he went through the pigeon holes, he found something that surprised him. And he called me up and he said “would you like to see this?”. There’s a letter, and it’s dated 23 June 1945. That’s 12 days after I met Jimmy Logan. And it’s addressed to Bjorne Halling. And Bjorne Halling at that time had a job that they fill now and then when they’ve got deserving, loyal people that need a job. They call it International Representative. It’s addressed to Bjorne Halling and it’s signed B.L. B.L. was later identified. Admitted to be, I knew it was Bill Lawrence. You know Bill Lawrence?

[01:45:58] **HOWARD:** Los Angeles.

[01:45:59] **SELDEN:** Bill Lawrence was a man I had known, also. Because I used to try to talk to him about the Trotskyist group that I was in. And Bjorne Halling also knew him. I don’t know whether or not they recognized the name. I guess I think they must have, anyhow. Anyhow, this letter says “Dear Bjorne.” [pause] “June 23, 1945. Dear Bjorne, In reply to your letter about Selden Osborne, the following is [inaudible] . This guy went to Stanford.” True. “This guy was offered a good job in industry but chose to be a labor leader.” That was a goddamn lie. I was never offered any kind of a job anywhere by anybody except the Socialist Party. [laugh] For six dollars a week.

[01:46:46] **HOWARD:** [laugh] Why should that be a crime anyway? Most of those guys were doing the same think right?

[01:46:51] **SELDEN:** It wasn’t. Oh no, no. But you see this—I didn’t finish what I was saying, you see. He said, “offered a job in industry but he chose to be a labor leader he's,” they magnify this a little bit, “He's a guy of ability. He is an organizer for the Trotskyists,” signed B.L. The secretary found that. see that. See that proves what Jimmy Logan did, you see, just as I thought he would do. He turned me in.

[01:47:22] **HOWARD:** Oh. And so Halling was contacting his friend in Los Angeles because he thought he might have had an experience with you—

[01:47:27] **SELDEN:** Because he knew that I had been in the shipyard union in San Pedro you see. So that was in January—I got that thing in January of 1948. And at the same time there was an attempt to—there was another big attempt to lay men off. Work had fallen off. The old-timers were demanding that they should have 40 hours a week work. But with all these people who had been taken into the union—everybody had been taken in now and rotated around, we only got two, three days a week of work. So the old-timers were furious about it. The president was a decent guy, and anti-Bridges man, a Catholic named—

[01:48:07] **HOWARD:** Kearney.

[01:48:08] **SELDEN:** Right. Jim Kearney. A decent man. But he's coming up with a layoff proposal. So I and friends of mine, a little tiny clique of friends, determine we're going to fight this layoff. And we got together on the night of the meetings. We were all members. The employers can't fire us. Can only be laid off by agreement between employers and the union. So the membership had to vote for it. So I went down on the night of the meeting—I went down an hour ahead and stood at the door. And when they open so that door I went in and I got the first microphone. And when the subject opened up—Kearney had meanwhile imposed three minute limit. When the subject opened up, I’m the first speaker against the layoff. And when it came to the end of three minutes I wasn't through. But I knew what a lot of these people who didn't know a little parliamentary

procedure. I had already spoken effectively and I appealed the decision of the chair to cut me off and won. So the layoff was defeated and I got a lot of credit for it.

[01:49:12] **HOWARD:** You did?

[01:49:13] **SELDEN:** Yes. I got —

[01:49:15] **HOWARD:** Who was in your group? You said you got together with a few friends who wanted to oppose the layoff?

[01:49:19] **SELDEN:** Well, Bart Abbott who is Jack London's grandson, who has been for umpteen years an alcoholic, is possibly sober now. I hope so because the judge is making him be sober. I hope so. He's a dear friend still. Frank Stout, a man that you ought to interview if you can.

[01:49:35] **HOWARD:** Stan mentioned him.

[01:49:37] **SELDEN:** Frank, if you do see him—Can I tell you where to find his—you can find his phone number.

[01:49:41] **HOWARD:** Sure.

[01:49:43] **SELDEN:** You can find his phone number in the Richmond [California] phone book.

[01:49:46] **HOWARD:** Because there's a Frank Stout in the San Francisco phone book. Or an F. Stout. I thought that was him. I was—

[01:49:49] **SELDEN:** Frank what?

[01:49:50] **HOWARD:** An F. Stout. That's not him.

[01:49:52] **SELDEN:** I don't think so. Try it. But look in the Richmond phone book and I think you'll see it. It says "Frank and Ann Stout." It used to have an address and now it doesn't. Now I'd like to have you think of this if you can. If he will talk to you. Don't mention my name when you call him.

[01:50:06] **HOWARD:** Don't?

[01:50:07] **SELDEN:** No. And I'll tell you the reason. He has apparently, and greatly to my sorrow, cut me off. I have a high regard for him, but I think he will not speak to me. And I think it would hurt if you mention my name. But you might, if you ever succeed interviewing him, then I'd appreciate it if you said, "well I interviewed"—me, and see what he says. I care for him. He's one of the few people on the waterfront I'd like to be in touch with. But I think he's for some reason he's turned against me.

Anyway, he was—Asher Harer, he's a Trotskyist. You know him? Well that's another good one. He remains a regular Trotskyist from the SWP [Socialist Workers Party] point of view. He was in Local 6 and then he started to work as a longshoreman probably a little before I did, about 1943, and he was very active in the union all through the years. And last year as he had back trouble I think, and he became a clerk.

[01:51:14] **HOWARD:** Asher Harer? Can you spell that?

[01:51:16] **SELDEN:** A-S-H-E-R H-A-R-E-R.

[01:51:20] **HOWARD:** Harer.

[01:51:23] **SELDEN:** Harer. And I'm sure you'll find him in the phonebook. If you don't find him—if for any reason, ask me. I can find it. I haven't gotten my little phone book I carry in my pocket with me and I don't think I've got him in it anyway. But I see him from time to time. He comes to demonstrations and things like that. He's retired now but he would probably be very glad to talk to you. He regards [Stan] Weir a little unfriendly perhaps because a lot of these—some of these people—most of these Marxist have a union or working class patriotism that leads them to the opinion that it's always wrong to go to court, as Weir had to go to court.

[01:52:12] **HOWARD:** Oh, I see.

[01:52:13] **SELDEN:** So it's an absurd point of view because [pause] you obviously can't get justice in the union.

[01:52:18] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:52:20] **SELDEN:** Yeah. But he's not—he knows [pause] he knows Stan and he's—and then of course Stan was in the WP [Workers Party] and Asher stayed in the—he was in the SWP always.

[01:52:29] **HOWARD:** Can I mention your name if I speak with Asher?

[01:52:31] **SELDEN:** Oh yes. Sure.

[01:52:32] **HOWARD:** Okay.

[01:52:32] **SELDEN:** And I think that my name will probably make a—help you a little, to talk to him.

Now what was—I was going to say about—oh. Well let me touch a little bit more about what happened in these, because you need to know this, I think. Although it doesn't need to go on the record, but—where I stand on all this. This [pause]—I was the first speaker and I think it's fair to say that most people credit me with defeating the—there were many more speakers after that. The leadership was [pause] uncertain. Bridges wasn't at the meeting I think. Henry Schmidt was there, and he spoke kind of *comme ci comme ca* [translation: so-so]. And —

[01:53:20] **HOWARD:** Was Kearney advocating that there would be a reduction in the workforce?

[01:53:23] **SELDEN:** Oh yes, he brought in the proposal. He—

[01:53:25] **HOWARD:** Okay. So you spoke against the proposal.

[01:53:27] **SELDEN:** I spoke against the proposal. He brought in the proposal.

[01:53:28] **HOWARD:** Now was there a racial dynamic underlying this in so far as the guys were going to be fired were the Black people mostly—

[01:53:34] **SELDEN:** Yes. They were—they were mostly Black. Yeah.

[01:53:37] **HOWARD:** And Kearney was conservative generally, on the political spectrum.

[01:53:41] **SELDEN:** Kearney was constantly accused by—he was more or less of a right winger and accused of being a racist. I never saw any—he was a Catholic. Now he's one of the few really believing—there's a great

accusation by the British people that the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions] had a big hand in that. That's bullshit. Kearney and one or two other people were really believing Catholics and they tried to translate Catholic trade unionist ideas. They met with the priest or the archbishop and I don't know whoever they did. But that's all. There wasn't any ACTU machine. There were right-wingers, and some of them were Catholic. And they supported Kearney because they hated Bridges and they hated the Blacks and so forth. But Kearney was a gang boss. Kearney was a hard worker. Invulnerable. [sic] He wanted, I guess, a high standard of living. And I had to, similarly, work a whole lot of extra. And I didn't have any high standard of living, and maybe he didn't either. But he worked extra. He worked extra jobs. He was a hard worker and a good man to work with. And as I say, I never—the accusations against him, I never saw any reason to believe that he's a racist. I don't think that—even then the people who were what I call were genuine Catholics, and I'm not pro-Catholic, were not racist. Their real religion couldn't allow them to be racist. They weren't.

But what happened now was, he was the president of the union. I was catapulted to a sudden prominence. A couple of people that I knew were communists came around maybe at that same meeting or right afterward and they wanted to know if I didn't play bridge and couldn't we get together on some social night, you know, and something like that.

[01:55:43] **HOWARD:** What did you say that was so persuasive?

[01:55:48] **SELDEN:** Well, essentially probably the way I talked before, you know. I said “We have a right to be here and we've got to share the hard times as well as the good.”

[01:56:02] **HOWARD:** That was really the first time you'd spoken up in a union meeting? You'd been invisible—

[01:56:05] **SELDEN:** No, I'd spoken once before that I told you about when I—

[01:56:09] **HOWARD:** Oh. This wasn't that time you told me about earlier.

[01:56:11] **SELDEN:** No.

[01:56:11] **HOWARD:** Oh. Okay.

[01:56:12] **SELDEN:** No. This earlier time was when they took in this last group, you see.

[01:56:15] **HOWARD:** Oh. Okay. That's right.

[01:56:16] **SELDEN:** They took in this last group. Now this last group was all in and they were planning to lay them off. Once again, I would not have let been laid off, because they had made a provision in the wartime when they are so pro-war you see—they made a provision that all the time the man served in the military service or in the Merchant Marines would be added onto his seniority.

[01:56:41] **HOWARD:** Okay. Which gave you a little more seniority than people coming in those coming in later.

[01:56:43] **SELDEN:** It would have given me a lot more seniority you see. So I wouldn't personally have been eliminated. Although I don't know if I even knew that for sure at the time. It wasn't—you know you can't think of all these things. I felt certainly completely apart of the people who were going to be—were threatened to be cut off.

[01:57:01] **HOWARD:** What proportion of them were Black? That were threatened immediately?

[01:57:04] **SELDEN:** Well, I can only guess, but my guess would be maybe three quarters.

[01:57:10] **HOWARD:** Three quarters. So it was substantially Black.

[01:57:12] **SELDEN:** Surely. You see it's like the whole majority of the union now is Black I would say in the local in San Francisco.

But now what's happened—this was in January 1948. In February 1948 they were already preparing—see the union contract expired—I think in those days it might have expired in September. I don't know now whether it expired in June or September. I've forgotten when the strike began. But anyhow the negotiating committee had begun to—had begun to negotiate for a new contract. And a meeting was called in—I think in February of 1948 and it was held in the Civic Auditorium. Because there were lots of longshoremen in those days. I think about 10,000. And Bridges was to report for the negotiating committee.

So we went there. And a big crowd of people. And [pause] Bridges made his report. And he reported negotiating committee were in favor of renewing the contract as is. 1948. Well, that meant no way to raise, you know. And I had used to be in the Firemen's Union. And even the Firemen's Union had just negotiated and they got ten cent raise. And this was shortly after you see—about a year—it was less than a year after the Taft-Hartley law had been passed. And then Bridges said—and this I heard very clearly—Bridges said, “Anyone who gives you different advice is either being paid off or getting the needle.” He meant dope [heroin]. He didn't really mean that, he meant being paid off. Anyone who gives you different advice is getting paid off. Getting paid off or getting the needle. Well I heard him say that, and I said to myself, “That could mean me, because I'm going to get them different advice.”

So I stood up with the microphone. I think a couple of people spoke in favor, and I had [inaudible]. And I spoke. And I thought—I had already thought this could mean me and I'm pretty sure I was very careful what I said. I didn't say very much. I said, “I don't think we should look forward to renewing the contract as is for—I think that, you know, even the Firemen's Union got ten cents an hour. We should get a little bit of a raise. And they just passed the Taft-Hartley law [Labor Management Relations Act of]. I don't think that there's any chance that the employers are going to renew the contract as is. They're going to use the Taft-Hartley law against us.”

When I said that [chuckles], Bridges of course, up on the platform, he rushed up and grabbed the microphone. He said, “I just recognized that guy. He's a phony from the steelworkers union [United Steelworkers]. If I'd seen him before he'd have never gotten in here.” [pause]. Oh I—

[02:00:24] **HOWARD:** Is that—

[02:00:25] **SELDEN:** I forgot to tell you of something that happened in between. There was a meeting in between. I made this speech against the layoff. Then there was the next union meeting. Maybe they had them every week then, or maybe every two weeks. At the next union meeting—I forgot this—

[END PART FOUR/BEGIN PART FIVE]

—spoke against the layoff at the time that Bridges denounced me as a phony. I forgot, because this had something to do with it. They had another meeting and they went—it was arranged—I'm sure this was a communist plan thing you see—by the communist leaders in the various unions to establish a—what do they call it? I can't think of what they called it now, but a committee to represent the various unions in preparation for

the strike. And so they elected eight members off the floor. And I had been two weeks before absolutely nobody. I was nominated for this thing and elected one of the eight.

[02:01:28] **HOWARD:** What was this thing?

[02:01:29] **SELDEN:** Well it was just a joint—they called it joint action committee.

[02:01:32] **HOWARD:** A joint action committee among which unions?

[02:01:34] **SELDEN:** Well it was going to be the—it was the longshoreman and the National Maritime Union was a principal one.

[02:01:42] **HOWARD:** This wasn't the Committee for Maritime Unity, was it? That have dissolved.

[02:01:45] **SELDEN:** The Committee for Maritime Unity was the thing in the 1946 strike and I think that its purpose has been above all to try to tie up Joe Curran who was leaving the Communist Party at that time. And he was the head of the NMU [National Maritime Union]. And they were trying to put the squeeze on him or prevent him from—from defecting from the communist orbit. That's what I think the Committee for Maritime Unity was and it came to nothing.

This was only a joint action committee. And it met in this port a few times. Maybe—well I guess it met all through the strike, but after a while I didn't go to it. I got elected with [pause] with two or three right-wingers and two or three more or less pro-Bridges. I don't remember who they all were. I remember one Black, who kind of a decent guy, was pro-Bridges. And I remember two or three right-wingers who are sort of friends of mine. And this is the thing that I'll give you now. When that meeting—when Bridges made a speech, you see. And then one or two people, friends of mine, or I did—I wasn't well acquainted yet of course, you know, but people I knew somewhat, and understood how these things operated, got up and fought back against Bridges, and Kearny more or less. They said, "If you've got anything to say about that guy, file charges." But then the meeting broke up. I think three right-wingers, and I think two or three of them had been elected with me on this committee and so knew me a little bit more. Three of them came up to me and one of them, a man who was later a business agent, and later the president of the union, and later didn't want to touch me with a ten-foot pole, or even speak to me right. But he insisted on walking to my car with me so that I wouldn't get beat up. It didn't anywhere near happen, but—

[02:03:52] **HOWARD:** How did you relate to the idea that the right-wingers were the people coming to your assistance, as a—you know, someone who identifies with the left?

[02:04:00] **SELDEN:** Well—

[02:04:01] **HOWARD:** It must have been very confusing. [laughs]

[02:04:03] **SELDEN:** You see the issue that they came on, and an issue that somewhat concerned me too was that maybe these people would beat me up.

[02:04:10] **HOWARD:** Yeah. No, I understand that.

[02:04:12] **SELDEN:** And so I really was pleased to have protection. And I didn't know—you see—who was I? I knew a few people that I had worked with, I knew this handful of political people, and that's all.

[02:04:32] **HOWARD:** How do you suppose you were projected to the rank-and-file as—I mean were you simply an anti-Bridges person? Were you a right-winger? Were you an independent anti-Bridges person? What do you feel was your image?

[02:04:47] **SELDEN:** You see this depended. You see first, supposing that Bridges—supposing that I had not spoken on that layoff thing, and that Bridges had got track of me and denounced me. [finger snap] I'd have been gone. I would have had no chance at all. If the investigating committee had been aware of me and if the chairman had been a little bit smart, as he might well have been—this is how I think he would have operated. Come in, talk to me, just asked me the regular questions. Perhaps he would have—could have done it the same way. Let me go. While I was out—while the committee talked it over, he'd say, "I have a little additional information from higher up that I'm not free to divulge about this guy. And I really think we don't need him. We've got thousands of men out there wanting a job. Let's just let him go." Where would I be? Gone. Nobody would have objected.

Similarly if I hadn't been known from that speech. But, because I spoke then—well I would have had a tiny bit of support from these political friends otherwise. I mean people would—now Frank Stout, and there's a guy named Kenny Austin. They to be buddies. Now, Kenny's probably still alive. They were both communists. Frank Stout fought in Spain. They were expelled from the Communist Party [pause] about when I first came here, or just after. So these people were my friends, a little bit. Not Kenny, but Frank was. And [pause] but you see [sighs] it would have been—there would have been no chance. You couldn't possibly survive. I would have seen them simply as a man damned by Bridges. That's enough. But because I spoke then, because a lot of these guys figured that I save their lives—well, and people that didn't feel that I saved their lives, you know, they felt that I had a big hand in changing this. And sometimes I speak effectively and I did then. So it gives you a whole different relationship.

So that's how I was this relationship you see, and then I'm elected to this committee. And then the next week Bridges says I'm a phony from the steelworkers union. Well what do they don't know what to think.

[02:07:13] **HOWARD:** Now, when he literally says that you're a phony, what are they supposed to interpret that as meaning?

[02:07:18] **SELDEN:** Well you've read the immigration hearings, and the kind of people that testified against Bridges there.

[02:07:28] **HOWARD:** Okay. That's just a blanket indictment then for anyone who's opposed to Bridges.

[02:07:32] **SELDEN:** Yes. Now if you compare the people that testified against Bridges in the immigration hearing with the people that testified against Bridges in the big trial in the 50s, their character is totally different. These guys are not phonies. They're leaders in the labor movement. I don't approve of them. I would not—as much as I hate Bridges, I would not—and much as—I wanted to deport him from president of the union but I didn't want to deport him from the United States. I would have not testified against him under any condition and I don't approve of their doing it. But they were not the kind of people that were hired by the government and the American Legion and what-not to lie about Bridges in the other trial. But that's how they were regarded you see. And there were phonies. There were spies in the labor movement.

I was accused of just almost a few days ago, because I had occasion to speak about this in the Unitarian Church. And one Black was there. Oh my God. He said—do you know [?Paul Jacobs?] ? [?Paul Jacobs?] was a pretty decent man, actually, but he did some wrong things.

[02:08:33] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:08:34] **SELDEN:** And he said, I'm the reincarnation of [?Paul Jacobs?] , he said. He meant by that—he meant potentially CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] , which Paul Jacobs was not. At all. But anyhow that's how it looked then. But and then there came the question, see—then, what's going to happen next? Well, strange things happen [chuckles].

I was walking down there at the end of Market Street and I met one of these right-wing guys that was on the committee with me. And I think he's a member of the executive board. And he said, "By the way, you know, Bridges is coming to the executive board tonight to press an issue against you." So I find out just by accident. I went to the executive board. It looks to Bridges like [laugh] like I've got information from everywhere you see. What Bridges tried to do was to get the executive board charges against me. Which they probably wouldn't have done anyhow, but with me there, they couldn't. They told him, "You bring them." Well we went through a whole lots of business. A couple of meetings—two or three meetings were taken up almost completely with my case. I won one of them. Told Bridges to file the charges. The membership meeting voted for it. And then the next meeting I made a mistake saying I want this thing done with as soon as possible.

[02:09:54] **HOWARD:** What was the nature of the charges?

[02:09:56] **SELDEN:** Well I'll come to that. But I better just finish. So Bridges took advantage of this and he turned it all around. And I want to make this comparison. This is not what I want to get in the record. I want to make a comparison not comparing my stature with Bridges at all, but look at this comparison. Bridges was charged in the 1950s with falsifying his application to be an American citizen by lying about his communist connections in the past. He was actually convicted of it so people don't—people forget that. He was convicted. The conviction was overturned on the basis of the statute of limitations. [pause] He was charged with a crime of—that he was alleged to have committed before he became a citizen. But the Supreme Court gave him—and I think properly, although I—gave him the complete rights of the Constitution of the United States. Now, Bridges charged me on two levels. In the first place, while the Constitution provides that written charges shall be filed, and [pause] everybody's number is put in a squirrel cage, and drawn out at random for a trial committee. Bridges said that he accused me of lying on my application for membership. Since that was prior to being a member, I was not entitled to the provisions of the Constitution. Isn't it an interesting parallel?

[02:12:03] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:12:04] **SELDEN:** Exactly his, and I didn't get the provisions of the Constitution. No written charges were ever filed. No trial committee was ever selected. Instead, on Bridges' motion I think, at least in his insistence, I was reinvestigated by the investigating committee already stacked with Stalinists. Only it turned out not to be completely stacked with [Stalinists] .

[02:12:26] **HOWARD:** What was the nature of the lying that you supposedly did on the —

[02:12:31] **SELDEN:** Yeah. [laugh] It's going to be a little bit hard to prove but I'll tell you it's a—because of the strange business. I did lie. But that wasn't what he thought.

Here's what happened. When I came up down at the employment office, you see, I applied for jobs in the longshoremen and I'm sent to some guy, a representative of the union and the employers. And he asked me all these various questions. One question you asked me is, "Do you have any experience as a longshoreman?" Well now, I would guess that about half of the people who got jobs when I did have no experience and lied about it and said they did have it. I did the opposite. I had worked as a longshoreman as I told you, in Stockton, and I said, "No." Why? Because I have no proof of it. And I knew that if I said, "Yes, I have experience as a longshoreman, I worked in Stockton," I foresaw, someday I'll come up for an investigation. And they'll say, Oh

you worked in Stockton. But what, haven't you got work?" And I haven't got any. And they regarded the extra men more or less as dirt. I had no anticipation I would ever really get any. So that's what I did.

So when this came up in the investigating committee before they could say anything I got up and said, "Yes I lied. And here's why." I wish I hadn't done that now, because I'm sure now when I look back on it that that's not the lie that Bridges alleged. He didn't—

[02:14:07] **HOWARD:** Probably not, no.

[02:14:08] **SELDEN:** No, he didn't care about that. This is what he thought. Here's what they did. This same guy at the employment office asked me about my work history. And I told him—I guess I told him all of it. But anyhow I certainly told him about going—I went to sea, you see, before the war. Then I worked in the shipyard. Then I went in the Army. Then I went to sea again. Well this guy said—because you see, what he was concerned about here was the seniority business—you add together—he said, "Add together all the time you went to sea and were in the army. How much time?" So I added it all together. And that's what he down. And it left out—I didn't leave it out. I sure as hell would if I had known and could have—it left out when I was in the shipyard union in very prominently a Trotskyist activist in that union, where they knew it. So that's what Bridges thought I lied about. That I left that out.

And then he said, he said, "The letters that go out in the course of the trial," he said, "The letters that go out summoning you to the investigating committee say, 'Bring with you all evidences of previous union affiliation.'" Well they normally do but mine didn't. And [laugh] I never throw anything away, I've got piles of junk. I went through it, and I found the damned letter and here it was. And here it was and it didn't say that. So that's how they were going to track—they counted on tracking me see, and they missed. [laugh] That's why he said that I lied. But you see this was only—this is only the formal accusation.

That wasn't the real accusation. The real accusation—once again, you see—nothing in writing, an illiterate secretary—not the secretary of the union, the secretary of the committee. Illiterate, so there's no record. Erkkila knows. Erkkila could tell you what the actual charges were, what actually happened, if you want, because he was there. The real charge was you see that I wasn't agent of the employers. That I had been a union wrecker in the union's I've been in before. That's what he said. And of course, for this—that I can assure you that I was not. And there wasn't one atom or shred of support to it. But—now I can't tell—now I can't read Bridges' mind. If he—now [chuckle] if you asked him, he wouldn't remember or wouldn't be willing to discuss it. I would certainly like to know what he really thought. I really think that he simply thought, "My authority—This is a no-good son of a bitch we've got to get rid of. My authority is great enough that it doesn't make any difference all say this."

What he did then—Erkkila was secretary of the union. And first they were going to send Erkkila down to San Pedro area down to interview these people. But then he decided Erkkila was too friendly to me so you had Erkkila write the letters. And they wrote to unions that I had been in before. The only thing they got back against to me—a man who had once been my friend in Torrance [California] . He had become a communist and he was the treasurer of the union. And the letter went to the secretary but the treasurer took it, and took it on himself to answer. And he said I was a supporter of [Francisco] Franco in Spain. Now I had written columns at that time in the union paper. Now the Trotskyist position, if you remember it was Spain was a big thing to us. And we were not in favor—we were not really were supporters of the loyalist government because they were too [pause] pussyfooting. We said they had to make a social revolution. So we were critical. Obviously. I feel that [pause], I had a column. . .

Let me tell you one other thing too that may be interesting. In the time at the end of the war—no before the war. Before I was drafted. When I was in the shipyard union, we fought against the concessions that were demanded of all workers and particularly shipyard worker, you know, in the interest of the war. And the head of the shipyard workers union. Can't speak his name right now, but he was an old socialist. He had been a socialist but he would sure as hell not a Trotskyist. And he wasn't a left-wing, so he was a strong supporter of the war. I don't think I really met him. But he knew of my existence to oppose it. And after I left, a man was elected—a sort of an old socialist, a Debsian socialist [Democratic Socialist]—was elected president of the union and the International took the local over into receivership. But this was when I was already drafted.

One of the people that Bridges had Erkkila write a letter to was this guy. President of the International, the guy in the local, and the guy in some regional office also. All three of these. Well, my friend Erkkila sent these letters out [inaudible]. But he also gave me copies. So I know where these letters went. I think I figured [laugh], one step farther than Bridges, at this time. Bridges and this guy, the head of the shipyard workers union, you know, they'd been like this [gestures demonstrating closeness] and the wartime, for every workers concession and everything else you know, because they were super patriots. But times had changed. The Cold War was on now. This guy didn't by any means share any bed with Bridges. And I sent him a telegram. And I said don't answer this letter until you get my letter. And I wrote him a letter what it was all about. And he wrote back [laugh] he wrote back to the local 10. He said, "While I may not always have seen eye-to-eye with Brother Osborne, I'm sure he'll find he's an asset to the CIO."

[02:20:18] **HOWARD:** [laugh] Great.

[02:20:21] **SELDEN:** So in spite of it all they failed to expel me and I managed to survive all through the years.

[02:20:29] **HOWARD:** Let me ask a little bit about the politics of Local 10 in the immediate postwar period. Bulcke as I understand was president during the war.

[02:20:37] **SELDEN:** Well know. Maybe I wasn't there. I think he was. You see when I got there Kearney was the president. And—

[02:20:45] **HOWARD:** Okay that's what I wanted to ask you. When was Kearney elected do you know? Or he was already president by the time you got there?

[02:20:54] **SELDEN:** Kearney had been vice president I believe, and. . .

[02:20:59] **HOWARD:** Yeah that he must have been under Bulcke. Because Bulcke told me he was vice president under him.

[02:21:03] **SELDEN:** Yes. And then he was president. He may have been vice president when I came. Erkkila was the chief dispatcher when I came. And Kearney may have been president or may have been—Kearney was you see later president in [pause] in 1948, Kearney was president.

[02:21:25] **HOWARD:** That late? It wasn't '46, '47ish?

[02:21:29] **SELDEN:** I can't remember now. I can't remember who was president. I should remember in the forty-six strike. It may have been Bulcke. But Bulcke was then later president after.

[02:21:42] **HOWARD:** Well let me ask you this then. Really what I'm after is what the significance of Kearney's victory was in that local. Did it represent a repudiation of left-wing political leadership?

[02:21:53] **SELDEN:** Well you see there was always—there was always substantial opposition to Bridges. Now I had thought that at some time, the local was completely controlled by the communists, but that was apparently not true. Now Henry Schmidt was president—in the thirties Henry Schmidt was president and Bulcke was president and there was some other guy sort of in-between sometimes. They had a term limit. You see, they could only be president for two years—originally it was one maybe. I don't know. For two years. But always in that time some of the people elected were anti-Bridges people.

[02:22:36] **HOWARD:** In Local 10 even?

[02:22:37] **SELDEN:** In Local 10 even. Now some of these people were later—there was a guy named Captain Knopf. K-N-O-P-F, who was somehow a popular figure after the strike, but was apparently quite a right-winger. I think they finally tried him but I don't remember now whether they—then there was a guy named Ivan [?Cox?] . Ivan [?Cox?] was the secretary. He was very anti-Bridges. And he was apparently kind of a nut of some kind, a religious nut, and maybe a little bit wacky. But he was secretary treasurer. And then there was a guy—funny, I can't think of this guy's name—there was another guy who was secretary treasurer who left the industry altogether and came back again after I was there and managed to be elected secretary treasurer again. And he was very anti-Bridges and even had to have gone along with some of these really crummy elements that opposed him. Although he was himself just an ordinary worker really.

So there was always a substantial—it was always a considerable part individuals. Individuals were elected. They could not elect their whole slate.

[02:23:52] **HOWARD:** Why do you think those individuals succeeded? Was it because their opposition was so weak? I mean the Bridges people that were running against them were so weak or what? How did they get in there as individuals?

[02:24:03] **SELDEN:** Well I said on both sides it was individuals. You see, partly it was—it may [pause]. Partly it was either being or seeming—in some cases it was only seeming, I think—more competent people. Now Schmidt and Bulcke are fairly competent people. And—well, Schmidt quite. I don't have such a picture of Bulcke, I don't know. Kearney, you see, was an able man. And he had—it was used against me, and maybe somewhat against him but not entirely against—that he had a college education.

[02:24:43] **HOWARD:** Kearney did?

[02:24:44] **SELDEN:** Kearney had a college education. In fact he went to law school. I don't think—he never finished law school. He never was admitted to the bar. In fact he never finished law school I'm quite sure.

[02:24:53] **HOWARD:** Why would a guy—I mean I can understand if you've got a left-wing commitment to the role of the unions in society, but why would a guy like Kearney get into the labor movement then?

[02:25:01] **SELDEN:** Well I think his father was a longshoreman. And I think he probably went to work to [pause]. . . You know he—and I'm absolutely sure of this—Erkkila is one of the guys that came in in '36, and I think Kearney was too. New people that came in 1936 came into a relatively good job, if you're willing to work. You see the union was established at Depression time. There weren't a lot of—there weren't lots of unions. Now Erkkila too. Erkkila went to junior college. And there was another guy, that's dead now, a friend of his that was also a very decent guy. His name was [?Brittany?] known as Baggy [?Brittany?] . Able man.

But see Erkkila spent the biggest share of the time as a union official. Kearney spent quite a lot of time as a union official and then as a gang boss. He worked extra too, which is hard work, but the gang boss is an easy

job. And Baggy [?Brittany?] got good jobs. They made, you know, they made a fair amount. They made a pretty good living. They made as good as they could have made, probably, in a minor professional job.

[02:26:16] **HOWARD:** So you don't—I mean my image of Kearney is that he was an instrument of the ACTU. That he was sent in there explicitly as a right-winger, and opposed Bridges, and took opposing stands on the Korean War and screening and things like that.

[02:26:32] **SELDEN:** No.

[02:26:34] **HOWARD:** You don't think there was a real shift ideologically then that was represented by his victory?

[02:26:38] **SELDEN:** Kearney—see Kearney was supported by all these right-wingers, but he was not sent in anywhere.

[02:26:49] **HOWARD:** But he did have a face among the rightwing in the union.

[02:26:51] **SELDEN:** The right-winger, yes. Now the things that you said except to the ACTU part could be applied to some of the other right-wingers. You know that, that they were—they were kind of miserable and vicious people. Kearney was not that. I would—I think that Kearney, if he'd lived—I don't know if they really wanted to or not. I was going to say—Kearney was the one who could have had political success in the Democratic Party. He was on the Board of Permit Appeals at some time you know. And I don't know if he ever really tried. But you know what I think about him, exactly contrary to what they say there—and then of course I was—I started out fighting this layoff you know, and many of his policies. But he was a pretty decent guy and a man who—it may have been that he really cared about the union movement. I think so.

[02:28:10] **HOWARD:** So I'm trying to sort of sort out in my own mind the two kinds of tensions that are always going on. The two reasons for which people vote for a union officer. One is because the guy is competent, he delivers the bread and butter, that sort of thing. The other that's related to that is that he has a political vision that corresponds with their own. Now you're saying on the one hand he was based among right-wingers. On the other hand he was just a good competent trade unionist. Can you sort either of those strands out?

[02:28:34] **SELDEN:** You see another—well there's another thing you see as far as the president is concerned, he runs the meetings. Now, they had at various times you know a requirement to come to meetings [cough] and you had to pay a fine if you didn't come [inaudible] .

Also a big share of the men were unionists. They liked to come to meetings. And they like—if they come to a meeting they liked to have a meeting run in some kind of fashion. Well, Kearney was good. Kearney could run it. While he stood for this and that, he was also a pretty fair man as the chairman. And he [pause] and he could keep some kind of order.

Oh and another thing about him—he had some humor. And he would—you know he—well he's more intelligent than a lot of people you know. And that makes a difference. It helps to have a guy in the leadership that's got some brains, if he doesn't just show it off and if he—as they say, I felt that he used it kind of fairly. I remember for example I tried to—I went to him before the layoff proposal. And I said, “I know you're going to propose a layoff.” I said, “I'd like to have you tell me exactly what it is so that I can prepare effectively to oppose it.” He wouldn't tell me, but he would be courteous and friendly and so on.

[02:30:07] **HOWARD:** Okay. So I guess my image is really overdrawn, in the sort of stone cold right-winger being elected.

[02:30:13] **SELDEN:** Oh no. He wasn't that at all. Now Walter Nelson, he's the one that—the right-winger that insisted on walking to my car with me. He became more of that kind of a guy. Although he's the kind of guy that grew up in the mission you know. And he didn't have the—he didn't have the competence, ability of Kearney, the smoothness. And he's—and then there was—there were many other right wing—there were other right wing presidents who [pause]. . .

But none of them—you know I can tell you this too. Do you ever run into the—there was a time that due to some kind of a fight in the—

[END PART FIVE/BEGIN PART SIX]

—engineers on the Isthmian Line [Isthmian Steamship Company] . There was quite a fight between the CIO and the AFL. And the longshoremen of course were going to support the CIO union. And there was talk then of the—you know there were a few ILA locals on the West Coast. There was Tacoma and Port Angeles and—

[02:31:25] **HOWARD:** A third one up there, yeah.

[02:31:26] **SELDEN:** A third one up there, yes. And there was a threat that the ILA was going to come down to San Francisco. And in fact it was rumored that they—this was out at Pier 48, I think. And they were supposed to have fixed up someplace where they can bunk these people and work strikebreakers at that time. And we had—Kearney was not president. We had a—I can't speak his name right now—a not very able guy who was later a walking boss, was a right-wing president. He didn't have a very good presence either.

But I remember one time by some chance being in his office with a guy—oh I have such a terrible time with names [pause]. There was that guy who was very prominent in the union, later became a walking boss. His original claim to fame was that he'd been kind of a bodyguard for Bridges. But he had become an extreme right winger. And he was known, as a number of the men were, not under their real names but under nicknames. This was the name that he supposedly fought under at one time. Anyhow, this guy sort of epitomized the right wing to most people, and racism and everything. But I can—and I can't tell you for sure what it was like but I have to tell you, I have felt that he really represented above all the right wing. And these people were—this is one of the guys who had been on that committee with me. Yes one of the right-wingers, I guess, who came to me that night too.

[02:33:14] **HOWARD:** Was his name [?Reiner?] or something?

[02:33:15] **SELDEN:** No.

[02:33:16] **HOWARD:** No?

[02:33:17] **SELDEN:** No. I'll think of it, but I can't right now. I certainly regarded him as that kind of a right winger. And I questioned—well I was not so—you know partly because Bridges was their enemy and my enemy, I was not quite so unfriendly. But I really questions their—in a way their ultimate loyalty to the union. But somehow—and this could have been done for my benefit, but I just—I just didn't think so and it certainly didn't seem to be any reason to. I was in there with just these two guys. And they got to talking about this the rest of the ILA. And this guy expressed himself in terms that meant to me that he'd charge a machine gun against that ILA, even though he's so much against Bridges, as a right winger.

Well I have to just—you know, I don't know really—he became a walking boss and of course the threat never materialized. I don't know whatever happens. I have forgotten how it went away. I've got some clippings about it. I just saw them at my house just now. I've got some various things.

[02:34:37] **HOWARD:** Okay then, I guess the bottom line here is that Kearney, though he was characterized as a right-winger and opposed Bridges on certain foreign policy question, didn't really represent—his election didn't represent a significant shift to the right within the union, and he was elected essentially on the basis of his competency, his sense of charisma—

[02:35:02] **SELDEN:** Well, it did represent this much. You see, in the years of the '30s, Bridges, Schmidt, Bulcke, were presidents of the union. And maybe one inconsequential person in between some—for some reason somewhere. But then these people all succeeded to coastwise or international jobs. And they didn't have successors in their political groups that were able to be elected for whatever reason. Throughout the time—throughout all those years we had, most of the time, right-wing presidents, with one exception. There was one [pause] oh my. Well one man, who on the basis of being a very good business agent and seemingly, I thought at least at that time, a fair man. He'd gone—I didn't tell you all the stories, but I had to make a trip to Stockton ultimately to prove that I really had been there and this man went along as a business agent. And he was very fair in that time. And he became the president and he became of this viciously pro-Bridges president. But he's about the only one of that group—he could be elected because [pause] maybe competence and maybe—there's another thing. It's just a kind of charisma, attractiveness of the person.

Now Kearney had that. And I guess there weren't any really of the Bridges point of view that had these—had these combination of things to be able to be elected. One of them—the man who had been the chairman of this investigating committee that I told you was a well-known Stalinist, was ultimately in for later years elected secretary-treasurer.

But—and then of course eventually, eventually the Blacks came in to play a bigger role. But the Blacks—there was one, I can't think of the name right now—one Black who was a pretty pro-Bridges, but not violently so. And he always treated me fairly. So he wasn't any extremist. He was. . .

[02:37:48] **HOWARD:** Okay. Moving just along chronologically then, the next period that I'm interested in is the screening. And you mentioned that you were actually screened.

[02:37:57] **SELDEN:** Oh yes.

[02:37:58] **HOWARD:** When did that take place? Briefly summarize it and. . .

[02:38:03] **SELDEN:** Well, this screening took place you know not just in the longshoremen but it took place really effectively among seaman. And all the radicals were completely eliminated from the seamen's unions. They are out. There aren't any. The reason that could be done in the seamen's union is because all the leadership cooperated. In fact that started while I was still going to see I guess in effect. Because just when I quit going to see they suddenly required what they never had done before, that you had to have a passport. And when I applied for a passport I was refused. Now they said you could appeal it and I never went through the procedure.

[02:38:54] **HOWARD:** What year were you screened?

[02:38:56] **SELDEN:** Well, this you see was before 1945 and the passport issue—

[02:39:00] **HOWARD:** Oh. Okay.

[02:39:01] **SELDEN:** But the screening part—the screening as it applied to the longshoremen—I think what they did—I'm not sure of this, but I think what they did was to effectively screen the seagoing unions before the longshoremen. And then, when I first went to work there I worked—I was given a Coast Guard pass and I worked all the jobs. Then [pause] I don't know just—I think the screening must have been as late as 1949.

[02:39:40] **HOWARD:** ‘Fifty I think actually is when it began. Yeah.

[02:39:42] **SELDEN:** Yes. Because I'm thinking about who was the president of the union. It's this man in whose office I was, in that experience that I told you about. Because he was a kind of a—he's a right winger and nothing charismatic or nothing competent or anything good about him particularly, but you know, not a vicious man. But he was the president of the union and I remember when the screening came up, well you know what happens. They simply put out a list of all these people who were refused Coast Guard passes and thereupon given the right to appeal.

[02:40:20] **HOWARD:** What number of people were on that list? Do you have any idea?

[02:40:23] **SELDEN:** No. Quite a lot. You see, who was on the list were all the—all the people with any great amount associated with the communists. And there were quite a few of them, know that. The few Trotskyists that were. And then there were a number of people on there by mistake.

[02:40:43] **HOWARD:** And there were people also for non-political reasons also right? If they were known to be alcoholics or something like that?

[02:40:48] **SELDEN:** Well maybe. I didn't know about that. There probably were. There probably were. There probably were. What they did was they allow you to—they allow you to prove your innocence when you don't know what the charge is.

[02:41:03] **HOWARD:** Yeah there were no charges specified, right?

[02:41:05] **SELDEN:** No. What they would do would be to ask you questions. Well I did not in those days belong to the Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], but I had belonged I guess. They came and defended me. Ernie Besig, was—and I say to him—really to his discredit you know—he didn't entirely do what I wanted done. Well what it turned out was, they asked me questions like—I certainly never intended to, but perjured myself. I can say it now. The statute of limitations is out run.

I didn't mean to. But look at what they did. They asked me—they didn't ask me, or at least I didn't admit to—I don't think they asked me if I belonged to the Workers Party. But they asked me—but I said I went to meetings of it. So they said “Okay.” They give a list of dates. “All these dates. Did you go?” Well probably I did, but where'd they get all that list? And then they asked me—they said, “Did you ever use another name?” That's when I perjured myself. I said, “No.” Well I didn't. Most people in the Party, and probably in the [?R.U.?], you probably took a phony name and most people do. But I never used a different name. Except that I didn't use—if I called up on the phone I didn't use the name Selden because that's too unique. I called myself “Slim” on the phone. That's all.

So I said, “No. I didn't use any name.” And they said, “Oh. In that case,” they said, “you wouldn't know anything about this article published in the internal bulletin: ‘Toward a Revolutionary Road’ by S. Robertson.”

[02:42:47] **HOWARD:** Was that you?

[02:42:48] **SELDEN:** That was me. Only I use the name only because—

[02:42:51] **HOWARD:** How did they find that out?

[02:42:52] **SELDEN:** In the internal bulletin—you see, you don't put something under your own name in the internal bulletin.

[02:42:57] **HOWARD:** Sure.

[02:42:57] **SELDEN:** Well I'll tell you another thing about how they found it. And then they said—and then they said—there was this argument wasn't there? They said that there was a guy who wanted to join the WP. But he was a conscientious objector. And so the big argument about whether he should be admitted. And you were against admitting him because you said he should go in the army and do revolutionary work. It was all true except that I was on the other side. The debate took place. I participated in it. I was in favor of admitting him. Now this meant to me, that out of our little tiny group, somebody made reports and he particularly hated me and so he put me on the other side of this issue. Out of our infinitesimal and inconsequential little group, somebody made reports.

[02:43:53] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:43:53] **SELDEN:** So what happened—but you know what happened. That Bridges had to defend—maybe he would anyhow, I don't know—but at least he had to defend the communists period and consequently we were simply barred from the—working with the Army and Navy and dynamite.

[02:44:06] **HOWARD:** But what percentage of the work was that that you were excluded from? And do it have any consequences really?

[02:44:10] **SELDEN:** No, you see, because what the union did—the union adopted a fair policy. They said any of these men—you see, we're called in rotation. If when you're called, you're called for an Army or a Navy job that you can't take, then you're held over and you're entitled to the next commercial job there is. So over a period of years there would once in a while be a time when you called for an Army or a Navy job and there isn't any commercial job. And for the whole dispatch there isn't. So over a period of years, I lost a few days.

[02:44:44] **HOWARD:** It was really not consequential to your earnings.

[02:44:46] **SELDEN:** Oh, I was glad. I didn't want to work for the Army or Navy. I'd like to refuse to work for the Army and Navy.

[02:44:51] **HOWARD:** Let's see, what was I going to ask that was related to that. Oh yeah, now that was a compromise between the original idea of the Coast Guard which was to simply screen you entirely from going offshore to work.

[02:45:04] **SELDEN:** Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

[02:45:05] **HOWARD:** And so how was the union able to enforce this compromise?

[02:45:09] **SELDEN:** Well I don't know. You see Bridges, Bridges had to be adamant on that because all of his supporters would have been screened out. Now that isn't to say maybe he would have anyhow. I just don't credit him with very much principal. But I may be wrong.

[02:45:24] **HOWARD:** And wasn't his position overturned in that longshore caucus? Do you know anything about that? It was a caucus in Coos Bay [California] and they voted against Bridges. There were two times that I know where he was repudiated and that period: The Korean War by Local 10 and screening in the caucus.

[02:45:41] **SELDEN:** Well I don't remember.

[02:45:44] **HOWARD:** But I think then the international went with him or something like that.

[02:45:46] **SELDEN:** I didn't—I don't know because I never—when I was starting to really study the thing, you know, I never really got into that part of it, because I only ever really worked on the earliest time. And while I may have known it at the time, because I might have been worried about it—I think I'd have been worried about it. I don't know. I don't remember.

[02:46:09] **HOWARD:** Do you have an approximate number of how many people might have been screened or were included on this original list? Was it more than 50, less than 100, that sort of stuff?

[02:46:19] **SELDEN:** Well [pause] more. I feel sure. Do you mean in San Francisco or all together?

[02:46:28] **HOWARD:** Well, you can give me a San Francisco figure and coastwise.

[02:46:32] **SELDEN:** Well my guess would be that it would certainly be in the hundreds in San Francisco.

[02:46:36] **HOWARD:** The hundreds. That includes longshore and offshore?

[02:46:38] **SELDEN:** No. I just mean of the longshoreman.

[02:46:39] **HOWARD:** Longshore.

[02:46:40] **SELDEN:** I know nothing about the seamen.

[02:46:41] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:46:42] **SELDEN:** Oh I think so.

[02:46:45] **HOWARD:** That's a substantial number.

[02:46:46] **SELDEN:** Oh yes. It was a substantial number. Which—

[02:46:49] **HOWARD:** You'd say more than a couple of hundred?

[02:46:51] **SELDEN:** Well I don't know if more than a couple hundred, but more than a hundred.

[02:46:53] **HOWARD:** More than a hundred, okay.

[02:46:54] **SELDEN:** And I would—I would even think probably more than a couple of hundred.

[02:47:01] **HOWARD:** Hmm. What kind of effect did that have on intimidating or silencing any radicalism or militancy within the union? Did you see anything like that? I mean that was Bridges position as I understand it. That this was simply an attempt to get militants.

[02:47:17] **SELDEN:** It was.

[02:47:18] **HOWARD:** To silence militants.

[02:47:18] **SELDEN:** Yeah.

[02:47:19] **HOWARD:** And it certainly would serve that purpose.

[02:47:21] **SELDEN:** Sure.

[02:47:21] **HOWARD:** But —

[02:47:22] **SELDEN:** But you see as long as they couldn't do it, it didn't silence them at all. Nobody cared if they didn't work for the Army or Navy. The funny thing is, I remember once there was a time—you know they had refrigeration jobs at the Navy, which these kind of jobs were only volunteer. You didn't have to take them. And I remember one time that they needed people so badly they suspended the restriction. And I went to work there. I worked there three days.

[02:47:51] **HOWARD:** What year was that? Do you know?

[02:47:51] **SELDEN:** No. I don't know what year. I might be able to find it in my workbook. But we worked there three days—

[02:48:00] **HOWARD:** That was Army or Navy?

[02:48:00] **SELDEN:** Navy. And we work today there three days. And the funny thing is we went—I think you know, we go over in a bus, and then the bus take you into Oakland [California] to eat. And it seems to me that, I went on the bus to go into Oakland to eat and when I came back they didn't want to let me back in [laugh]. They had to finally.

They had also—they had another—

[02:48:21] **HOWARD:** They intentionally dropped it though, the screening on you, right? For the three day period. They knew that—there wasn't a mistake or something like that?

[02:48:27] **SELDEN:** No. The dispatchers announced, "For this job, the screenos can go." [laugh]

[02:48:35] **HOWARD:** That's what they called you, "screenos"?

[02:48:36] **SELDEN:** Yeah. Well I've got to tell you another thing about the man, whose name I can't remember right now and I will. The man who said had a prize fighting name, was such a right-winger. He ran for vice president of the union one time. And sometimes, sometimes they—you know, there was a big campaign. You know how they do—they do a great—I put out a leaflet—I brought some leaflets and I'll give you if you like of my own. They put out all kinds of things to campaign. Well this guy, this guy was running for vice president, and he put high up in the hiring hall put up a great big thing. And he had a picture—he had a picture of a train [pause] a train full of people going to Tulalake [California, where prisoners of war were interned] . You know where Tulalake was? And he, [laugh] he said, "Vote for so-and-so for vice president," he said. "Let's play screeno." [laugh]

[02:49:25] **HOWARD:** [laugh] What was he saying? He was just clowning around or he was serious?

[02:49:32] **SELDEN:** Just clowning around. Just saying, you know, “Vote for me, I’m an advocate of this screening.” But you see, he does it—he can do it with humor. You know, I can accept that as [chuckles]—it’s a vicious thing—

[02:49:41] **HOWARD:** [laugh] Sure.

[02:49:41] **SELDEN:** But it’s—but he does it humorously.

[02:49:44] **HOWARD:** [laugh] A strange group.

[02:49:47] **SELDEN:** Yeah.

[02:49:48] **HOWARD:** Okay so—do you know anywhere that might have records of the screening, the number of people that were screened? Do you think the Coast Guard would have that information? If the union has it, they are telling me.

[02:49:59] **SELDEN:** No they aren’t.

[02:50:02] **HOWARD:** No.

[02:50:04] **SELDEN:** Yeah. The Coast Guard would have it, I suppose. The Coast Guard did it.

[02:50:08] **HOWARD:** They probably wouldn’t release it without, you know —

[02:50:09] **SELDEN:** You see—you see the people that you appeared before was the Coast Guard officer, representative of the employers, right-wing representative of the local. Now the right-wing representative of the local was a guy that was kind of sort of friendly to me, but that didn’t affect it any.

[02:50:24] **HOWARD:** Who was it, do you know?

[02:50:25] **SELDEN:** Can’t remember the name now. I would be able to think—he was another—at least, it may have change from time to time, but I’m pretty sure that on there at one time was this—one of the guys that was on that committee with me, and that lived out in my neighborhood. And the funny thing he was quite right winger but I remember that he, he was a little bit friendly to me, a little bit friendly to Asher Harer. Sometimes you can’t understand quite what motivates people or maybe they just dissemble.

[02:50:56] **HOWARD:** Okay. I have two final questions. One is: how would you explain the durability of a guy like Bridges, who was accused by the government, accused by the press, accused by most labor leaders in this country of being a red, a radical, a communist? Why would these guys support him? Does it reflect the fact that they were themselves somewhat radicalized? Or did politics have nothing to do with the reason that Bridges stayed in power as long as he did?

[02:51:22] **SELDEN:** Well, one factor—you know in any power one factor is always one or another form of a political machine. And, you know, that usually has a bad connotation but it wouldn’t necessarily have. He had—there was an apparatus of communist support. For instance, many of the old-timers—let’s start a different way. Bridges—Bridges probably gave good leadership to the union in the early days and he probably had courage and ability and [pause] he accumulated around him [pause] a section of people who were not anywhere near as able as he but who had some ability and some strength and some courage. And they became—and many of them became gang bosses, which gave them a certain status. A gang boss then was important to this, and it doesn’t exist now. [inaudible] . They became stewards and activists in the union [pause] and dispatchers and

other officials. But then he had, in the early days of course, The Waterfront Worker. Later on the—and always the official communist paper, whatever it is. Western Worker and then The People's World. And then of course—

[02:53:26] **HOWARD:** Excuse me. You could make another argument like in several of the other left-wing unions, people like James Matles in the UE and others, had the same kinds of support but didn't hold on to the base the same way the Bridges did. And certainly in the Cold War having support from the communists could be a real stigma.

[02:53:41] **SELDEN:** Yeah.

[02:53:41] **HOWARD:** It didn't work that way and Bridges' case.

[02:53:45] **SELDEN:** Well—

[02:53:45] **HOWARD:** I mean I don't—there's no easy answer to this. I realize that. It's a complex historical process.

[02:53:49] **SELDEN:** One difference of course is that the size of the unions. Our union is much smaller.

[02:54:05] **HOWARD:** Well let me ask you another related sort of question, which hinges on the same sort of thing. Was there any pattern within the union to the people that supported Bridges or supported oppositional characters, either by generation, race, religion, ethnicity? Let's take them one at a time if we can. Was there a generational split? One of the hypotheses that I've suggested is that people who came out of the '34 strike, the '34 men, were the most intensely loyal to Bridges. Does that hold water?

[02:54:35] **SELDEN:** Well, some of them were. There were a lot of them that were very anti-Bridges. That I knew. He certainly had a very strong core of people from that time who supported him. There are also—and these people were probably—well I don't know. Some of the right-wingers were very active in the union. In a way, active as anti-Bridges. So that's hard to say. And you see, among the younger men, you've got to realize that one of the things that the Communist Party did was to bring in the younger men.

Now Goldblatt was—Goldblatt you know was a little older than I. [He was] A student at Cal when I was at Stanford. He came in and he worked six months as a warehouseman and he became official of some kind. And he was some kind of an official all the rest of his life. Eventually of course he split with Bridges. You know that. But he was a very strong supporter. He was one of the guys that was brought in. There were many others brought in especially to the warehouse union. Now there were in our union too—I don't—so I don't think you could make that kind of vision.

I think you could say that almost all of the Blacks were pro-Bridges. Although I think when it—certainly many of them were friends of mine and they were not pro-Bridges as, you know, to help to hang me at all. But they were pro-Bridges as against the right-wingers, because the right-wingers were racists. And also because they felt that Bridges had brought them in, had given them a chance.

[02:56:31] **HOWARD:** How about religion?

[02:56:35] **SELDEN:** I don't think that religion had much of anything to do with it. You see, Bridges called himself a Catholic.

[02:56:47] **HOWARD:** But did repudiate it, didn't he? Catholic—

[02:56:48] **SELDEN:** I don't know. Maybe he was born a Catholic.

[02:56:50] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[02:56:52] **SELDEN:** I suppose that—yes. The Catholic—yeah, it's—I suppose it did. I suppose it's—insofar as they were active Catholic, they probably tended to be anti-Bridges.

[02:57:06] **HOWARD:** And what about industry divisions? I didn't understand. My reading of it is that longshore was actually one of the basis of opposition to Bridges where is Hawaii and the warehouse division were more loyal throughout this period.

[02:57:17] **SELDEN:** Yes that's true. You see—but that changed. Hawaii organized by Jack Hall. And I think Henry Schmidt had a little bit to do with it. And Jack Hall became the head man in Hawaii. And he was—oh he had been very pro-Bridges. But in the end you know he was going to run against Bridges when he died.

[02:57:43] **HOWARD:** Oh, I didn't know that.

[02:57:44] **SELDEN:** Oh yes. He was associated with Goldblatt and the present president perhaps. Well the present president was, you know—Bridges took this—what's his name?

[02:57:53] **HOWARD:** Herman?

[02:57:54] **SELDEN:** Took Herman to Australia with him one time. He was grooming him as his heir apparent, but in the end he turned against him.

[02:57:59] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[02:58:01] **SELDEN:** Or Herman was against Bridges. I don't know. Herman is no good in my—I don't like any of these guys. Herman was—do you know about this? Just to show you how they operate: one time—I don't know. I can't tell you what year.

Usually through the years I used to attend the meetings of the convention or caucus if they were held in San Francisco. But as the years went on I became less interested somewhat. And I remember— one time however, they had caucus—you ever heard about—you need to hear about—again I can't tell you his name. But a guy that was a business agent in San Pedro and that they—Bridges let employers deregister him for what he did as a business agent? You don't know that story?

[02:58:49] **HOWARD:** I don't think I've heard that one. No.

[02:58:50] **SELDEN:** Oh you better hear that. Wow. You better hear it in detail. Which is just the way I'll give it to you. But there's a man, a man [pause] who was a very popular, and presumably a very effective business agent. And as a business agent he called several work stoppages. Then he was out of office and he participated in one or two out of office. And somehow the employers—this is in a time when Bulcke was the arbitrator whenever that was in San Pedro—

[02:59:21] **HOWARD:** 'Sixty to 'sixty-six I think is what he said. Okay.

[02:59:23] **SELDEN:** Okay. Well the employers—the employer succeeded in deregistering this guy. I don't see how in the hell Bridges could ever with a straight face support that. But anyhow they held a caucus in San Francisco to deal with this issue. And I went to it. I went to it, not knowing much about it, and not being much in favor of this guy. I thought these guys in Pedro were mostly just wild-eyed Mexicans, you know, and they

don't know what they want and I don't know what. Because they didn't ever—I don't know. We didn't get together. Los Angeles and San Pedro were always used against each other. But Bridges is always succeeds in doing that somehow. But I listen to this guy and I said, “My God this guy is really—” I was really impressed with the way he conducted his own defense and so forth. But he lost.

Anyway I'm only saying this really—sorry it was a preface to say—after a while another package came along and I didn't have much interest. I didn't pay too much attention at all. But finally—but one day I worked a very short night. I woke up the next morning and I thought, I thought, Maybe I'll go down to that caucus. I was still living at home with my wife and my son. I'm about to leave the house. My phone rang and my son called me to the phone. And I went to the phone. And a deep gravelly voice said, “Bridges says you're afraid to come to this caucus. And if you come he'll have you thrown out.” Can you imagine it? I said, “What? Well who's this?” The phone hung up. Well now I'm challenged, so I'm going to go, you know. So I went. I went down. The place is full of everybody. And Bridges—

[END PART SIX]